

CLASSIC MUSIC NEVER GETS OLD

DOWN THE LINE



MIKE STAND:

"All I Wanna Do, Is Find The Place Where I Melt Into You"

ISSUE 3 APRIL 2009
DOWNTHELINEZINE.COM

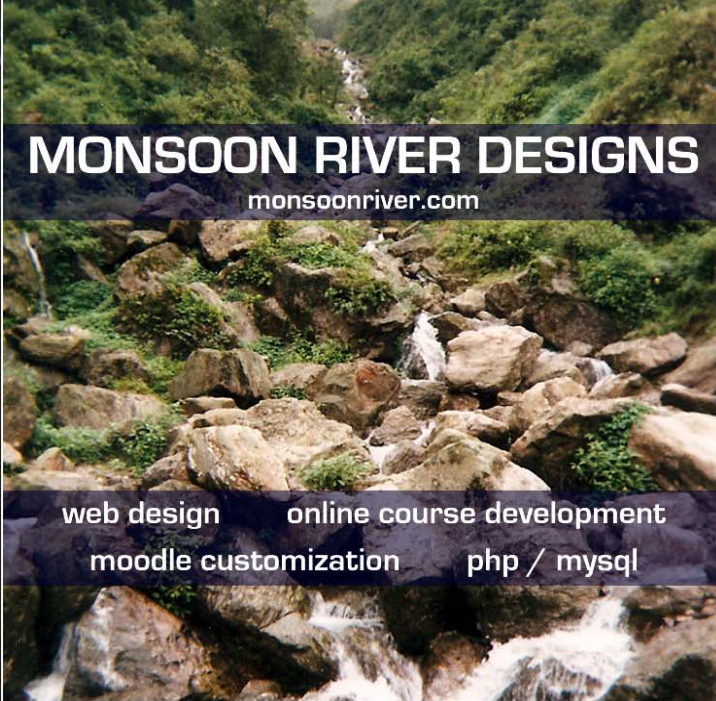
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GROUND MUSIC OF THE
1980's & 90s MADE UNDER
THE DREADED TAG OF
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ONE is "a grassroots campaign and advocacy organization backed by more than 2 million people who are committed to the fight against extreme poverty and preventable disease, particularly in Africa. Cofounded by Bono and other campaigners, ONE is nonpartisan and works closely with African policy makers and activists. At ONE, we achieve change through advocacy. We hold world leaders to account for the commitments they've made to fight extreme poverty, and we campaign for better development policies, more effective aid and trade reform. We also support greater democracy, accountability and transparency to ensure policies to beat poverty are implemented effectively." See www.one.org (*The ONE Campaign did not buy this ad nor do they endorse this magazine - just givin' ya food for thought*)

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THANKS FOR THE STORIES

We had some great stories come in over the past few weeks about Gene Eugene. Keep them coming if you've got them. We can add them to the website pretty quickly.

Sometimes, I consider maybe making this whole thing a website. I wonder why we bother with a magazine version sometimes. Not that I hate it or anything, it just seems that everything is moving that direction, so why not just go all online?

Well, that won't happen anytime soon, but we will still continue to archive each issue online about 3 months or so after they are released. So be sure to go and comment on the articles that you liked – or add stories that others might be interested in.

<http://www.downthelinezine.com>

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COMING SOON:
Interviews with
Michael Roe
Vigilantes of Love
Underground Music Archive

DOWN THE LINE

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IF YOU MOVE Don't lose your computer – you won't be able to download the newest issue without one.

WRITE US Letters and comments need to contain your full name. All submissions become property of Down the Line E-zine and may be edited or condensed. Or even printed out and framed if you really kiss our... um... never mind....

VISION:

Down the Line covers bands that explored the intersection between faith and art in the 1980s through the early 1990s - even though they were probably never accepted in to what is called "Contemporary Christian Music" because they were too edgy or alternative or liberal or for whatever reason. Some of these bands may still be making music today, and others may have moved on. We cover these bands (active or dormant) as well as any new projects by former members of these bands and any new bands that may have the same spirit as these bands.

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(there would be a whole lot more technical mumbo jumbo in this space if we were more professional. But that would be boring and all...)

LETTERS TO US

Bill Speaks

Steve and all,

This thing looks great; If there is justice in the world (and i pray there is) this thing is destined for greatness...

Bravo...and all the best to you!

pax Christi,
Bill Mallonee

(Okay – even when Bill writes a Letter to the Editor, it still sounds cooler than anything I have heard. Go buy all of this guy's music already....)

Word From Down Under

I am LOVING it.

I'm down here in Australia and I used to have a couple of radio shows and I'd try and slip in as much Gene Eugene, Terry Taylor, Mike Knott, The Choir, etc., etc.

Please do a story on the amazing Marc Byrd – Common Children, Hammock, The Choir, Glass Byrd, etc., etc... I just LOVE his stuff.

Thanks man!

Keep up the BRILLIANT job

DJ Paine
Australia

(Thanks DJ – we will track down Marc if possible. There was much more to this letter, but it was all “etc.’s”, and we were told last issue by the abbreviation police that we are only allowed four per issue. Which really stinks, because I love abbreviations, acronyms, etc., etc. Oh, wait...)

The Truth Revealed

Wow, a Vigilantes of Love and King's X review, and then a Gene Eugene tribute issue! Where have you guys been all my life?! Finally, a magazine that talks about all the music I love. Keep the good stuff coming!

Bp (via the Archives site)

(Where have we been. Well, you see, it goes something like this... Ten years ago, in 1972, we were part of a crack commando unit that was sent to prison by a military court for a crime we didn't

commit. We promptly escaped from a maximum security stockade to the Los Angeles underground.... But the rest is boring and we don't speak of it much...)

Blog Comments

Issue #2 is great! Good job! The interview with Brian Doidge was a great read and I'm so happy to read about how God has redeemed his life. Can't wait for issue #3!

Mark Melton

I'm really glad you guys have put together this magazine. I've certainly enjoyed reading it, and look forward to future issues. Thank you!

The Spheric1

(and, of course we return fan appreciation by... being late on the next issue once again! We are Gen Xer's...what can we say?)

Correction

I wanted to write and point out the need for a correction in your latest mag. In your review for the Sound Gallery "Umbra" record, you have it listed as a 2008 Lo-Fidelity release. While we dig Herb and his music, this info is incorrect as we have no connection with the release. Great mag by the way....keep it up.

Thanks,

Jeffrey K.
Lo-Fidelity Records

(Sorry about that ! I'll have to whip our slacker editor with a wet noodle for that one. Okay. Done. That really doesn't hurt as much as it should....)

Have any other questions, comments, theological musings, etc? We would love to hear them – come be our friend on MySpace or comment on our blog. We also do that Twitter thing occasionally:

<http://www.downthelinezine.com>
<http://myspace.com/downthelinezine>
<http://twitter.com/downthelinezine>

The Crucified Box Set

Out of nowhere, The Crucified have announced that they are releasing a box set of all of their material - from early demos to final studio cuts and everything in between (all re-mastered, of course). Look for a June 2nd release on Tooth & Nail records with almost 2 hours of exclusive video footage. T-Shirts are already available from Zambooie. They will also be playing the Encore stage at C-Stone. See their home page (TheCrucified.net) for more details as they emerge.

Greg Minier also has a MySpace page with new music (which is totally different from his past stuff, but pretty cool). See: MySpace.com/gregminier

Sincerely Paul re-issue

Looks like all the surgeries and other issues surrounding Sincerely Paul/Slide are working out now, and plans for some music releases are moving forward. A new website has been unveiled, along with new songs on their MySpace page. Official release date for the Grieve 2 disc re-issue is May 5th. Pre-orders are now being accepted.

See SlideMusicGroup.com for track listing, artwork, and more news. Also, be on the look out for new Slide songs to materialize soon.

Writ on Water Tour Plans?

The Writ on Water MySpace page announced that they are working toward putting together a lineup for live dates, possibly later this year. Keep an eye on WritOnWater.com for updates. They are also making their music available through more and more digital outlets, including iTunes now.

SF59. Silver. Vinyl. !!!

Yep - you read that right - the debut album by Starflyer 59 is finally on vinyl. It's a limited pressing on 180 gram vinyl, so grab it fast! For ordering details:

CrossroadsOfAmericaRecords.com

Also, be sure to check out the newly released "Minor Keys" ep by SF59, featuring acoustic versions of songs from Dial M and a cover of "Under The Milky Way" by The Church. Available through iTunes or Amazon mp3.

Terry Taylor Tour

LAM Productions announced that Terry Taylor and friends want to tour this summer. Spots are being booked for June 19-July 12. If interested, see:

<http://lamconcerts.com/>

The Lost Dogs Recording

Hopefully, by the time you read this, The Lost Dogs will have concluded recording 14 songs for the upcoming Route 66 album. Reports indicate that there has been a lot of collaboration on this album and that it will cover many genres. Some rough mixes are surfacing on their MySpace page. TheLostDogs.com

Glenn Rowlands EP

Glenn Rowlands has released a companion ep to his recent full length "Red Road." "Living Light" is a rock and roll tribute to the visions of Holy Man Black Elk and can be ordered for \$2 by sending a PayPal payment to:

rowlandsg@yahoo.com.

For more information, see:

www.myspace.com/glennrowlandscd

4-4-1 Releases Live Album

The new album by 4-4-1 is out! It has two new songs and 8 live tracks recorded at the Broken records reunion concert in 2005. The new songs were recorded with Jason Martin of Starflyer 59. We were treated to a special preview of them, and they sounded great. See 441online.com for ordering details.

The Bloody Strummers

A new project by Joshua Lory (L.S.U./Lifesavers/Western Grace) called The Bloody Strummers has surfaced. Joshua describes it best

on the MySpace page: "Driven by the boredom of a bandless life in a new town, Joshua Lory of Western Grace, Lifesavers, and L.S. Underground, sought out a cure for his cabin fever. The end result is swinging blend of garage, psychedelic, shoegaze, gospel, and surf/punk called The Bloody Strummers. Josh plays all the instruments with a few friends as guest musicians. His first release "Return Of The Halcyon Days" is due sometime 2009." Michael Knott is also doing artwork for the album.

MySpace.com/TheBloodyStrummers

U2 Release Everything

Or just about everything. Their first three studio albums have been re-issued, all with regular editions and special editions that come with a book and a bonus disc of B-sides and unreleased tracks. They also finally released *No Line On The Horizon*, that immediately went multi-platinum around the world. A world stadium is now gearing up, and announcements have come in that they will release a second new album soon called *Songs of Ascent*, as well as re-issuing *The Unforgettable Fire*. Top all of this off with a special bonus double disc of unreleased songs for all paying fan club members. And probably a few other albums I missed - these guys have gone crazy this year!

U2.com

Bill Mallonee Digital Releases

Two new digital releases are available at volsounds.com. Pick up the Vigilantes of Love: *Live @ Eddies* (full length) and Bill Mallonee: *Works (in) Progress Administration Vol 3* (ep), both for around \$5.

Hidden From Blackout

Breakups and Fur Coats is finally available for purchase! Described as a "beautiful 12 song collection of melodic, textured, reflective, and emotionally engaging songs," it was recorded at Hail Mary Studios and co-produced / co-mixed by Michael Knott. For ordering details,



This was an email that was sent out to Bill Mallonee's mailing list. I thought it was a great little write up/story, so I figured it would make a great column this issue. I consider Bill Mallonee and his wife my friends, and I genuinely admire them and respect them for their honesty and integrity. I've seen Bill get kicked around quite a bit online... that coupled with the fact that I don't think his music gets the attention it deserves is a blow that would probably drop a lesser person. I'm glad that I have this forum to express my admiration for them, and I'm glad that Bill still puts out the most consistent, well-written Americana/Folk that I know of. I, for one, need his music in my life.

Bill Mallonee / Vigilantes of Love Bio Quotes:
Athens, Ga.
Americana/Folk-Rock/Rock/Folk

– Review Quotes –

Bill Mallonee: #65 in Paste Magazine's "100 Greatest Living Songwriter's" Poll

"The poetry and intelligence of Bill Mallonee's songs rivals Dylan's, and the spirituality and inspiration of them is like the timeless hymns. He's one of my favorite all time artists." –Buddy Miller (No Depression Magazine's Artist of the Decade)

"...the best folk-rock act nobody's ever hear of..." – New York Press

"Bill Mallonee... [has] remained fascinated with the shadowy emotional toils and struggles inherent in the American experience, compelling, insightful, [he] continues to probe through Americana rock and roll proving that sometimes the only story worth telling is that of the journey." – Rolling Stone

"Dylan-tinged vocal and introspective lyrics that spin out big-picture stories imbued with chilling small details." – Billboard

"Mallonee's songs give words to shadowy fears of intimacy, of its loss, even of the value of what he feels compelled to do." – USA Today

Related links:

To hear Bill Mallonee/Vigilantes of Love work check: Works Progress Administration:

MySpace.com/WorksProgressAdministration

Bill Mallonee / Vigilantes of Love:

MySpace.com/BillMallonee

To purchase Bill Mallonee / VoL albums, including WPA projects: VolSounds.com

Bill Mallonee News: BillMallonee.net

MySpace: MySpace.com/BillMallonee

Booking Info: highhorsebooking@hotmail.com

A Review of Bill Mallonee's Works Progress Administration – Volumes 1-3

by Luke Johnson, Phantom Tollbooth

I've loved all things Bill Mallonee since I first heard the Americana-roots rocker *Audible Sigh* in 2001. Let me make that disclaimer. I'm unable to be unbiased, but frankly, who is when it comes to Mallonee? Whether with the *Vigilantes of Love* or in his solo gigging, Mallonee always draws controversy, whether it is the subject matter of his songs, his divorce, his conversion to Roman Catholicism, it all seems to get people talking faster than a rumor at a Wednesday night prayer meeting.

It is curious, then, that Bill Mallonee has wandered in obscurity so long. It has confounded reviewers and fans alike for years now. It becomes all the more curious considering that both *World Magazine* and *Christianity Today* ran articles on Mallonee recently. It's as if everyone "in the know" were trying to keep him hush-hush – or everyone that got the recommendation couldn't pick a good song out of the air if it tapped them on the shoulder.

Whoever dropped the ball along the way in getting the word out becomes irrelevant eventually. You chalk it up to providence, and you move on. In this case, without a record label for years now, Bill Mallonee continues to do the only thing that is logical: keep making music no matter the cost. That's what he was made to do, and he's sticking to it.

There's little secret that Mallonee has sold lots of gear to continue to make music. Ever the touring troubadour, you can arrange him to play in your humble home for a song these days – literally, almost. In this, Bill Mallonee embodies very nearly what many of us consider to be the most pure motive for making music: the need of the soul and the ear of the listener.

Now, without coin and with conscience, he has embarked on the raggedy *Works (in) Progress Administration*. I mean no disrespect in labeling such an undertaking "raggedy". Moments of inspiration surface in such settings. WPA is raggedy in the sense of Bruce Springsteen's "Nebraska," Dylan's "Blood on the Tracks," or Neil Young's "Harvest." The lovable object of familiarity can be gloriously raggedy.

The WPA is not one album but a series of EPs, numbering three currently, that Mallonee has recorded in the simplest form possible. Bass and drums, if needed, are basic. Vocals are warm but blurry occasionally, and guitars sound immediate as if recorded to a four track like you did back in high school. This back to basics approach that has worked for such acts as The Mountain Goats and Bright Eyes also works for Mallonee.

You can accuse Bill Mallonee of many things but trickery, dishonesty, and artifice won't make the list. While Mallonee's lyrics at times can be confusing, he never hides behind them. Mallonee is synonymous with heart-on-sleeve songwriting and WPA continues such a tradition.

<http://consequenceofsound.net/author/ljohnson/>

http://blogcritics.org/writer/luke_johnson

<http://www.tollbooth.org>

(not the actual matt)

Matt's Musings and Meanderings

Steve and I get to have some interesting conversations in the course of putting together this magazine. Usually, they are the cool kind of interesting. Occasionally, they are the really off-the-wall, "what the heck?" kind of conversations with people. Luckily, we haven't had any of those "that ruined my day" kind of interesting conversations.

But, I know human beings, so that is bound to happen one day. And you can expect that first bad conversation to be thoroughly mocked here in this column.

Once such recent conversation with Steve was about an email exchange he had with someone that was one of those really off-the-wall types. The gist of the discussion (other than "is this guy insane or high on something"), was about how this dude blasted Steve, and then pulled the "God accepts me just for who I am" card.

In other words, he was telling Steve that he was going to act like a jerk and Steve had to take it or be labeled... well... something I can't print here if I want to make sure the site doesn't get blocked by over-zealous filtration software.

There are three things that really bug me about this line of thinking:

1. It always pains me to see people use the whole "He takes people as they are" crutch. That is true, but only half the picture. The other half, the good part in my opinion, is that God also calls us to be a better person at the same time He takes us as we are. If God just accepted us as we are, He would be some Great Enabler. If He just demanded that we do a better job, He would be the old "Big Army Boot in the Sky," ready to stomp on us for messing up. Seems like most Christians fall towards one of those two extremes.... Either "I'm good the way that I am, so up yours" kind of attitude or the "gotta get everything perfect and holy before I can accept that you are a Christian" junk.
2. This "Great Enabler" crutch always seems to be followed with the revelation that you don't have to care what people think about you. Great... it took you how long to figure out Christianity 101 dude? Now why don't you work on the next step, where God actually teaches you how to be a better person and get along with other people? That's a big step, one I am still trying to figure out, but at least I know enough to know that sitting on your kiester, stomping your feet and having a tantrum about "God loves me just the way that I am" is no where in the Bible.
3. The final step to creating a tri-fecta pseudo-Christian whinefest is to talk about all the people that you know that fell away and still aren't following God.... like it is some kind of big revelation that people "receive the word with joy, but when the trials of life come, they wither away." Oh, wait... I was just quoting the parable of the seeds on the path or whatever it is called. So, it's some big revelation that people are doing exactly what Jesus said they would do 2000 years ago? The point of talking about this is only to show how holy you are and how unholy others are, but the effect is really one of smirking and giggling behind your back.

see HiddenFromBlackout.com

Burnt Toast Vinyl

If you are looking for good music from new bands that know how to rock, check out Burnt Toast Vinyl and some of their bands: Unwed Sailor, Bosque Brown, Saxon Shore, Yndi Halda, and more. BTV also releases albums by other cool bands on vinyl, such as Starflyer 59's *Dial M* and mewithoutyou's *It's All Crazy! It's All False! It's All A Dream! It's Alright*. For details, see BurntToastVinyl.com.

Velvet Blue Music

VBM also keeps the cool and underground flowing, with new releases from Ronald of Orange (featuring Ronnie Martin), Gary Murray & LN (back together), Frank Lenz, and Doug Burr. See VelvetBlueMusic.com for details.

God's Not Dead

Been looking for something new to read? How about: "God's Not Dead (And Neither Are We): The story of Christian alternative rock's pioneers then and now, as told by the artists themselves" – featuring interviews with Mike Stand (Altar Boys), Joe Taylor (Undercover), Derri Daugherty (The Choir), Nancy Jo Mann (Barnabas), Terry Scott Taylor (Daniel Amos), and others. Find it on Amazon.com – and check out this product description: "While bands such as Switchfoot and Jars of Clay are household names, the artists who paved the way for their success by first introducing modern rock to Christian music are all but forgotten by the very industry they created. Now, they are telling their story from the beginning to the present day. This book isn't about where are they now, but who are they now as with frank and sometimes shocking openness the ones who went before talk about their lives and times... a time that is not yet passed."

Send Us Your News

Got a band that you think fits in here? Send your news announcements to downthelinezine@gmail.com.

This page: The Altar Billies (L to R): Johnny X, Mike Stand, and Chris "Cowbell" Cummings.



MIKE STAND



& THE ALTAR BOYS

"All I Wanna Do, Is Find The Place Where I Melt Into You"

*By Steve Ruff
Photos courtesy of Mike Stand*

9 DOWN THE LINE

Mike Stand really needs no introduction here. The lead singer / front man for The Altar Boys is steeped in history within this music scene, and will still be around for a long time to come. I was excited about getting an interview with Mike for a couple of reasons. I love The Altar Boys and I still spin their records (yes, vinyl) routinely at my house. I also appreciate Mike's solo output. His first solo record *Do I Stand Alone* was a musical milestone in my life. It was one of those albums that – when I first heard it as a teenager – made me feel okay to be me... or it made me feel a little more okay to be me. I felt that it was okay to question, to be honest and to speak up. It's a great record. The Altar Boys were revolutionary in the Christian music scene. When they started there were very few bands making this kind of music. There was The Lifesavers, Undercover, Martus and maybe a couple of others. They were one of the first to be sure, and they left a mark upon this music scene that still holds up well.

Mike was kind of like a ghost for a long time. I tried adding The Altar Boys to my MySpace friends list but that didn't work, I tried FaceBooking him but that didn't work either. Obviously Stand isn't really his last name and I had no clue what it was. I had just about given up on finding him when Beth Jahnsen from Take Two Productions came through and hooked me up. I want to say thanks to Beth and to Mike for this interview, it was a joy to do. Mike first contributed to our last issue dedicated to Gene Eugene, and that is up at our website so check that out if you haven't already. Mike had some great answers to the questions – there's history here and what he's up to now which is very cool. This is just straight question/answer stuff to make it an easier read – enjoy!!!

When / how did you first get into the industry?

The Altar Boys first recording was in 1983 with Dan Willard on the MRC label. We recorded "Where's It Gonna Lead You" for a compilation with Undercover and other bands, it was called *What's Shak'n*. We put out the first Altar Boys recording in March of 1984 followed by 4 more recordings.

Can you give a little back story on the Altar Boys and how that came to fruition?

In 1980 I committed my life to Jesus Christ and began working on my salvation with "fear and trembling". I began playing in a Christian rock group called "Image" with my cousins Jeff and Bill Crandall and a guy named Armand Barocio. We were not really that good, but it was a start. The band lasted for about two years.

Anyway, Bill and Armand kind of dropped out of Image after about a year and we got a different bass player along with Ken Tamplin from Shout but that really didn't work either. Jeff and I decided to form a different band – the Altar Boys name came later. Ironically, we auditioned lead singers, and someone who could be a front man. I had no intention of being the main songwriter, singer or front man – it wasn't even on my radar. As you might guess we couldn't find anyone who fit the bill, so at some

point I decided just to do it – I suppose it worked out in the end and was meant to be.

I remember in 1981 I went to see my brother's band "The Lifesavers" play and became inspired. I became good friends with the guys in Undercover and began writing songs with a more punk feel to them. I kind of felt that I was just writing Beatles music that was sped up. We did experiment with ska and light pop, but I think we did the "power punk" (or whatever you want to call it) the best. Hence, you see the results of what I was really going for on *Gut Level Music*, *When You're a Rebel* had hints of it as did *Against the Grain*. By the time we recorded *Forever Mercy* we had kind of strayed from our original sound – bad move.

Our first bass player came as a recommendation from Undercover, he stayed with us for about 2 years until Ric joined the band - that change improved the band greatly. Steve auditioned for the group in May of 1982 - he was a real good fit.

We played our first gig at First Baptist church in Fullerton in July of 1983. I have some great photos from that gig. We were well received. After that first performance the band sort of took off and we played anywhere and everywhere, about 10 times a month... I suppose the rest is history (With a small h).

Out of curiosity, how did you become a believer?

In 1980 I decided that I needed a Savior. I was never a drug addict or alcoholic or into stuff like that. I definitely had my issues, and still do, but I just came to a point where I knew there was a God and that it would be better if I started working out my faith "in fear and trembling." I know, not as exciting as some people's testimony but I bet mine is more the norm. I think we often give more credence to those that came from the gutter, rather than rejoicing in the fact that any conversion really is a miracle.

Why was straying from the 'original sound' a bad move in your opinion? Do you think that you lost fans, etc.?

Growing up I always enjoyed those bands that tried new things or altered their sound a bit – the best example is the Beatles. But the Altar Boys are not even close to the Beatles, but we sought to be a little more melodic on *Mercy*. But our fan base loved the hard driving stuff. With that said, the *Mercy* project was just so different, it had its good moments but everyone wanted to hear *Gut Level Music*. In the end, the music did not "work" very well in the live setting. Hence we pulled mostly from our older material - even at our reunion concerts the only song we did from *Mercy* was "Forever Mercy." Ric and I have often talked about *Mercy* and what were trying to do, and kind of where we went wrong. Yet, some people love *Mercy* and it is their favorite recording – so what do I know? We were hoping to do a 6th record called *No Substitute* that really was basically more in line with *Gut Level Music*, but we just could not seem to get back into the studio. Some

of those songs were used on the Clash of Symbol's first recording while others are not going anywhere.

Being one of the forerunners in the scene, what type of obstacles did you encounter and have to overcome as a band?

We really did not have a huge amount of obstacles. Most people were very gracious to us. I think one thing that did bother us a bit was the fact that some churches would host our band and used our popularity to bring in kids to their church – not a bad thing – but we would play for 20 minutes while they gave a 30 minute sermon. That wasn't every church mind you, but I kind of felt like that was a little deceitful. In essence the kids didn't get a concert by The Altar Boys, but were duped into coming to hear a Bible study that we happened to played at – and it was not advertised that way. Bible Studies are great, but I always felt that if a person took their time out – and maybe paid money – to hear us, then we should make it worth their effort. All in all, that really irritated me and the guys, and try as we may, it was difficult to communicate that to our hosts. Again, I am all for communicating the Good News of Christ, but let's not do it in such a way that the message is hindered by our actions, and let's do it in a way that it shows respect and love to others. Some of these churches even admitted that we were simply bait, at first I was okay with that, but gradually I realized that this type of attitude really wasn't an accurate or a fair assessment of our ministry. Again, this did not occur at every church we played at and some bands have no problem with this type of arrangement, but it did happen from time to time and I just am of the opinion that we can all do a bit better when it comes to the way we evangelize.

When you look back on the years of The Altar Boys, what is it that comes to mind? How do you think that your band marked/impacted the scene?

When I look back, I always tell people that I wished I would have done two things differently: Enjoyed it more and trusted God during the difficult times. Without going into detail, I think I let some things really "get to me." Sometimes the pressure on us really was overwhelming. We put ourselves into a position that required so much effort, planning and energy. We had very little tour support and most of the details were really left to us to figure out – most of the time the responsibility was on me to workout the details... to the point that it often distracted me from focusing on what I was really supposed to do (play music and do ministry). At one point the guys even came to me and said "Man, you just seem to be so scatter brained." They were just concerned, but I already I knew that I wasn't on top of things. I was just so distracted by all that I had to do to keep this "machine" going. That isn't to say that Ric, and particularly Jeff, didn't do "their" part, it just kind of wound up that a lot of things were on my shoulders. We did go through a number of managers, and we sought help, but there was still

a lot gaps that had to be filled in and I had to do it. Be that as it may, God was faithful even when I wasn't, and His hand was always on us... always! I am not sure what impact we had, I suppose we were pioneers in some ways, but in all fairness I think guys like Undercover and The Lifesavers really were the catalyst that got us going. Without them I do not think Altar Boys would have happened like it did.

How did the decision come about to do your solo albums?

In 1987 and 1988 I had written a number of songs that I knew would not fit on an Altar Boys record. I approached Frontline about doing a solo project, and they agreed to sign me up – it was a nice outlet, and it also put more coins into their pocket. Nevertheless, I put together a great band – Tim Chandler / bass, Dave Raven / Drums, and Rob Watson produced it – everything really fell into place, it was really an enjoyable record and I think it came out well. In 1990 I decided to do another recording – again, I did not consider these songs to be in the vein of the Altar Boys. We were going to hire Rob again but Rick Elias kind of worked his way in and won me over. Not as enjoyable of a record. Rick did a good job on many things, so I am not dissing his production ability, but there was some tension during the project that was non existent on the *Stand Alone* record. We used "his" band for the project and while they were very good, and rose to the occasion, it was obvious that they were "Rick's band." In the end I do believe *Simple Expression* came out equally as well as *Do I Stand Alone* and it was the last project I did with Frontline. Both solo projects were very different, but I look back at them fondly.... I think in many ways maybe *Simple Expression* might be just a little better.... but *Stand Alone* has some stronger moments if that makes any sense.

Are there any future plans for the Altar Boys?

Funny you should ask that question. I've just started up a rockabilly version of the Altar Boys called The Altar Billies.



11 DOWN THE LINE

It really wasn't my idea, for the past 7 years I have been hanging with this guy named Johnny X. Johnny plays drums, guitar, and upright. At one point he mentioned to me that he thought a lot of my music could be done in the rockabilly style and format. He even did a demo of *Against The Grain* and won me over. However, for the past few years I have been working on a master's degree and second teaching credentials so I have been basically been "dead in the water." To make a long story short, the Altar Billies is up and going and it is wonderful.... the guys are great and more importantly I get to play the songs again and my "ole Tele." Since we are all dads, have families and careers, I am not sure about touring and the like, we'll just take it as it comes. In the mean time, it is great to do ministry in this format

What do you think about the digital revolution when it comes to music in this day and age?

I think the digital revolution is great. I mean now bands do not have to go through record companies to get their songs out there. With MySpace and YouTube one can get access to the entire world. Also, it is now possible to record a great demo or entire project right at home on your computer. The Altar Billies did an incredible demo on Garage Band. That program is kind of considered low budget by most people, but our demo sounds great. So no longer do you have to go into a studio to get a good product. If one takes their time they can do something really great that is close to, or equally as good in quality as, almost any studio.

Any plans to record with the Altar Billies, or any music that will be released for sale?

Anything really is possible and I think we will do some recording. I plan to get a Pro Tools set up (just LE). That first demo I did on Garage Band and I think it sounds pretty good actually! Tonebox Records distributes most of the Altar Boys music on the net (iTunes etc.....). So, any Altar Billies project will most likely be made available for download through them. It could possibly include the three songs that one can hear on The Altar Billies MySpace page ("Against the Grain," "Listen Up," and "Live"). I have several unreleased Altar Boys recordings and other material that may finally see the light of day including a favorite instrumental I wrote in 1989 called "Altar Boys Go Skating." We have renamed it "Hayride Billies", sped it up to a fast bluegrass pace and put a twang to it, and it's a good'n! There are many other songs as well, the sky really is the limit with these guys. Johnny X and Chris "Cowbell" are excited about the "Billies" and are looking forward to putting as much time as they can into this project (balanced with family, job, and church commitments).

What would you say to any new bands starting out?

Funny you should ask that, I have made mention of this very thing in several of my blogs and in my dealing with different Christian artists I have met – including one that

just came through our church today. But in short I would encourage them to protect their hearts, and to "enjoy" it. The evil one will do everything he can to bring you down, I think he especially targets Christians who are musicians because he was once "in charge" of leading the angels in worship before the Lord God. So I suppose he really has it out for those of us that are engaged in this act of worship, because he cannot stand to see all of the praise, honor and glory go to the Lord.

Do you still merchandise for sale?

We still have a number of *When You're a Rebel*, *Full Circle*, *Simple Expression*, and *Sunday Is An All Together Different Proposition* CD's. The thing is that most of the Altar Boys, Clash of Symbols, and my solo material is available for download through iTunes and other sites. However it looks like CD's will become obsolete very soon, who would have thought? So, what technology will they come up with that will dethrone iTunes and Napster? It really is an unbelievable time that we are living in, so many great opportunities for musicians, but there was a charm about the old days when the album covers were as important as the music. Then again that was then and I suppose that now it all has charm of its own. As a matter of fact, my son insists on having a "cover flow" for every song on his iPod. He seems to get it... I guess he's a lot like his old man!

www.altarboys.com

www.myspace.com/altarbillies

www.myspace.com/altarboysmusic

www.mikestand.net

Thanks again to Mike for taking the time to do this interview with me! I'm sure you readers are wondering what the other members of the Altar Boys are up to now, so below is a little update section!

JEFF CRANDALL

"Currently, I am the Worship Pastor at High Desert Church in Victorville, CA. Jenny and I now have three children, Ben 8 years old, Ryan 4 and Sam 2. I graduated from the International School of Theology in 1994 with a Masters of Pastoral Studies Certificate.

God has taught me a lot since The Boys stopped playing together. I've learned a great deal about marriage and relationships. Over the years, my worship and musical experience in Christ has literally been transformed. I've learned so many new things that unfortunately the limited space in this newsletter does not allow me to elaborate. Once again, I want to thank you for all the support you gave us throughout the years. Many of you have continually prayed for us, and encouraged us in so many ways. Always remember that 'You Are Loved.'"

STEVE PANNIER

"Hello everyone! A lot of changes have happened in my life since I stopped playing with the Altar Boys. My family and I lived in Nashville and Oregon for a season before settling right back here in sunny Southern California. Perhaps the biggest change of all has been the addition

of my now 8 year old son Sean and 3 year old Hailey. They are the 'apple' of my eye.

Since coming back to California I've been blessed with a very successful landscape business. It's great to be working outdoors as a landscaper. Love the Lord and remember, there's no substitute for volume."

MARK ROBERTSON

"I first saw the Boys in about '84 or '85. I had only been a Christian for a couple years and was excited to find that you could be a believer and still play good music! I remember a friend telling me 'These guys are great, you should start a band like this.' I said, 'No, I should be in this band!' I became an Altar Boy in August 1990 and stayed 'til August 1991. It was a year that I will always remember as one of the major highlights of my career.

I felt strongly that God was leading me away from Southern Cal, so I packed up and moved to Chicago. I briefly joined a band called The Stand, then took over

bass duties for Rick Elias. I also sing for my own band This Train, which is now signed and taking up most of my time. I also began producing records. I've produced about 15 or so by now, which is a whole lot of fun. I also had the great privilege of playing for 4 years with Rich Mullins, who became a close friend and mentor to me. He taught me a lot about music, got me involved in Native American missions, and helped me become a stronger Christian.

Perhaps the greatest happening is my recent marriage to Janel. The only way to describe her is: what a woman. She's all I've ever wanted and more."

RIC ALBA

After recording his *Holes in the Floor of Heaven* album, Ric has been dedicated to finishing school. He is working on his degree in social work and spends most of his time working with organizations in the fight against AIDS. He also has a side project called 'Chef's Hat Boxing', but because of his current schedule the band only gigs once a month.

MIKE STAND COMPLETE DISCOGRAPHY

CLASH OF SYMBOLS

Year	Title	Label	Distribution
1995	<i>Begging at the Temple Gate Called Beautiful</i>	Brainstorm	Diamante
1994	<i>Sunday is an All Together Different Proposition</i>	Independent	True Tunes

MIKE STAND

2002	Full Circle	Galaxy21	Diamante
1992	<i>Mercy Thoughts</i>	Independent	True Tunes
1990	<i>Simple Expression</i>	Frontline	Benson
1988	<i>Do I Stand Alone</i>	Frontline	Benson

ALTAR BOYS

2000	<i>Live at Cornerstone 2000</i>	M8 Records	Independent
1991	<i>The Collection</i>	Frontline	Benson
1989	<i>Forever Mercy</i>	Frontline	Benson
1987	<i>Against the Grain</i>	Frontline	Benson
1986	<i>Gut Level Music</i>	Frontline	Benson
1985	<i>When You're a Rebel</i>	Broken	Word
1984	<i>Altar Boys</i>	MRC	Independent
1984	<i>*What's Shakin'</i>	MRC	Independent
1983	<i>*Back to the Rock 2</i>	A & S	Word

* Compilation album with other artists



SLIDE (L to R): Mike Baker, James Preston, Sam Mitchell

SLIDE / SINCERELY PAUL

An Interview with James Preston and Mike Baker

Interview by Matt Crosslin | Photo courtesy of James Preston

It's an all too common story in the music industry: band creates underground buzz, band gets signed, band puts out an album, label folds or drops band, and band disappears (s much as people complain about the dreaded "sophomore album," most bands should be celebrating the fact that they even made it that far). Sincerely Paul was one such band. Fortunately, the story doesn't end there. Dormant for over a decade, the buzz for Sincerely Paul recently re-ignited (due mainly to a small number of websites) into a full blown re-issue and even the resurrection of a related band under the name of SLIDE. How does SLIDE relate to Sincerely Paul? What can we expect in the future? Read on as James Preston and Mike Baker answer our questions....

For those that might be unfamiliar with Sincerely Paul, could you give us a brief run down of the history of the band - how it started, what the musical influences were, etc?

Sincerely Paul was formed in 1988 by three high school friends and one acquaintance. These core members began looking for a lead singer. At the time, I (James), was working as a teacher's aide with the bass player's mother. She mentioned to me that her son's band was looking for a singer. I sent them a demo tape, and was asked to join. Mike Baker came along a little bit later and began playing drums with us. The band began performing at churches, and within our 1st year, we were asked to play at the 1988 Cornerstone

Festival in Illinois. After the festival, a lot of doors began to open for us. We began to play and opened for L.S.U., Undercover, The Choir, The Altar Boys etc.... We played at other Christian festivals including Creation Fest in 1992, Six Flags Atlanta Fest in 1993, Knott's Berry Farm Jubilation Nights, as well as major Hollywood Clubs including The Troubadour, The Whiskey, and The Roxy. We also opened for new wave faves "A Flock of Seagulls". Sincerely Paul played lots of shows. We loved playing live, and we played so many places..... honestly, its hard to remember some of the venues. Influences? That's a hard question because each of us had our own favorites that we drew creative juices from. It is impossible to be an artist and not carry some of that influence into the creative process of writing, performing and recording. Although we made an effort to remain unique and original I would say that a good part of instrumental stuff on *Grieve* was heavily influenced by Pink Floyd, The Cure and Psychedelic Furs.

How did Sincerely Paul get signed to Blonde Vinyl? What was that experience like?

During the first part of 1991 we were engaged in talks with several record companies trying to find a home for our music. We had found ourselves being booked often with Mike Knott's Band "Lifesavers Underground," and got to know Mike through these live shows. I believe Mike approached us personally and asked us to be a part of Blonde Vinyl and we accepted.

So, Sincerely Paul was signed to Blonde Vinyl Records in 1991.

We felt Blonde Vinyl allowed the band to express itself artistically with minimal restrictions. In short, Blonde Vinyl allowed us to maintain our sound and message without any drastic changes. The experience working with Mike Knott and Blonde Vinyl was great. Mike was very supportive of our direction and goals. We were excited to have Gene Eugene work with us on the project as well (Gene mixed some tracks on *Grieve*). We actually signed the recording contract with Mike Knott over dinner at a restaurant (near the Blonde Vinyl Office) in Orange County, CA. Since both of us (Mike and James) live in O.C., we pass that restaurant from time to time, and often reflect back at that time with gratitude.

Many Blonde Vinyl bands were considered "controversial" for pushing the boundaries. Was there any controversy surrounding Sincerely Paul?

Sincerely Paul was no stranger to controversy. There is a story James shares inside the bio of the upcoming re-issue of the *Grieve* CD where one church literally stopped one of our shows and escorted us out of their building. The biggest controversy we had at the time was our lyrical message and dark appearance. Industry folks and many magazine reviewers thought since we came from Orange County, CA that we should all be rich, happy and shallow. Some even labeled us as 'posers.' We were really misunderstood. The sad thing is that none of those who judged us this way knew anything about our collective pasts or that James was training to be a licensed psychotherapist. Maybe we were drawing from a well deeper than a collective admiration for our favorite bands. Maybe we had real life experiences that allowed us to express a way for people to move from a painful past to a future of hope? Most of our listeners loved what we did, but the majority of the Christian Music Machine didn't "get it," didn't want to "get it," and hence steered clear of us out of their own fears of something different. The lyrics and the message of *Grieve* challenges the listener to remove masks, confront falsities about themselves, and makes them deal with difficult, taboo issues head on. We knew that concept frightened a lot of decision makers in the Christian industry who were used to signing bands who perpetuated the "shiny happy perfect Christian" mold. Even though we were considered a 'dark' and 'brooding' band by many our message was never one of despair – it is about real people, living real life in real time. Our message was always filled with hope, renewal and recovery – one just had to dig deep to mine the diamond buried in black coal.

What happened to the band after releasing *Grieve*?

Once *Grieve* was released, Sincerely Paul began to

play more live shows within the Club Circuit in Hollywood, CA. As a band, we found we were more accepted playing bars and clubs in Hollywood, than we were at churches and youth group rallies. In a lot of ways, the secular audience we attracted were more responsive to us.... maybe they could better relate to our message and style of music? In addition, other big venues like Creation Fest and Atlanta Fest welcomed us to play in front of larger audiences. Our listener and fan base grew once *Grieve* was released because people outside of California were now able to commercially have access to our CD in stores. We also began to play live outside California as well, hitting some southern and east coast locations.

How did SLIDE come about? What is the story of SLIDE? Is there any difference between SLIDE in the 90's and SLIDE in 2009 (as far as musical direction, goals, etc)? How would you compare and contrast Sincerely Paul with SLIDE?

SLIDE came about immediately after Sincerely Paul broke up in 1993. Mike Baker and I along with our new member, Sam Mitchell, began writing music together. SLIDE was approached by R.E.X. records to provide a single for their compilation CD. The single, "The Black and the Blue" was released commercially and received a lot of positive feedback, and from that, we were offered a recording deal with R.E.X.. There really is no deep back story to SLIDE. Mike, Sam, and I wanted to make music, because we love writing music. We love the experience of being in a band and working as a team collaborative effort. We wanted the music to be different from what we did in Sincerely Paul. More upbeat, not as dark... more danceable, but still maintaining a band atmosphere where live instrumentation meets electronic technology. The only difference between the SLIDE of the 90's and the SLIDE of today is the way we write music. As you probably know, the internet has changed how bands write music. We no longer are confined to a sound proof garage (where all band members squeeze in together) to write music. The only thing Slide will have in common with Sincerely Paul is band members James and Mike. The sound we are going for will not resemble Sincerely Paul, and thus, this is not a sequel to Sincerely Paul. After all these years, we are fortunate to have all 3 original members of SLIDE (from the 90's) working together again. We are also fortunate to have sound engineer Brian Webster on board with us again. He recorded, produced and engineered many of Sincerely Paul's tracks and live show. He even recorded and engineered the 1993 version of "The Black and the Blue." Even still, we don't consider this a reunion, because SLIDE never commercially released a full length LP, and SLIDE was so short-lived. So it's kind of a unique situation we are in, presenting ourselves at this time in our lives. Our goals for SLIDE are to write some really good music, have fun with the writing process, and hopefully grow

our listener base through the World Wide Web. In comparison to Sincerely Paul, we would probably say we hope our lyrical content will continue to stir emotions and cause our listeners to think.

A little over a decade and half later, and *Grieve* is getting re-issued. How did that come about?

The re-issue of *Grieve* came about because of the internet and fans of Sincerely Paul who have been in contact with us for the past couple of years thru email. The re-issue would have never happened without the help of blogs that were set up by listeners who remembered our music and emails that we continually receive from listeners who remember us. Also, the re-issue would never have occurred without the help of Mike Knott. I (James) contacted Mike Knott and asked him to sell me the publishing rights to *Grieve*. Mike Knott agreed, and I met with him to finalize a deal for me to obtain the rights to own *Grieve*. We are thankful Mike did this for us. We are hoping the re-issue of *Grieve* will help bridge past Sincerely Paul listeners to SLIDE so they can experience some new music from us.



What can you tell us about the re-issue of *Grieve*?

The Sincerely Paul re-release of *Grieve* will be issued as a 2-Disc Definitive Edition. **The official release date is Tuesday, May 5, 2009.** The first 300 copies sold will be considered limited editions and will include a special numbered insert signed by original Sincerely Paul band members James Preston and Mike Baker. Digitally enhanced for 2009, *Grieve* has been given a complete makeover. The 2-Disc edition will include new art work, an insightful bio/essay, new pics, and 11 unreleased tracks. **The CD can be purchased at www.slidemusicgroup.com.**

What future plans do you have with SLIDE?

For the immediate future, SLIDE plans on releasing a full length CD and digital downloads by 2010. We love to play live and interact with our listeners, so we hope we get the opportunity to play live again soon. Keep checking our website www.SlideMusicGroup.com and www.myspace.com/slide for details.

Some people say the music industry is in bad shape. Do you agree? Why, or why not?

It would appear the music industry is in bad shape monetarily speaking (and in some ways creatively speaking as well). It's definitely not the mega money maker it used to be. We don't think there is one single reason for this....maybe it's because of the way people are obtaining and listening music these days (i.e.: internet/digital downloads, iPods, etc.)? Maybe it's the way music and bands have been marketed? Things really had become formulaic and commercialized. Thank God new venues like XM/Sirius satellite radio and websites to download new music are available as an alternative to commercial channels! We will say this – sometimes something old has to die before something new can be conceived and born. The death of the “formula” has given rise to a new breed of creativity which would have never been heard or even given a chance to blossom through traditional channels.

What advice would you have for bands such as Sincerely Paul that want to come back and re-release old material, or maybe even record new material? What advice would you have for new bands that are just now getting started?

We would say make sure you go thru the proper legal channels to make sure you have the rights to release your work. Use the internet, sharpen your internet skills, make the internet your best friend. Write and perform live anywhere and everywhere (no matter how many people show up to your show), and be accessible to your listener base. It is also important to remember that not all bands were made for re-uniting to make new material. Sometimes you need to move forward with new ideas. Make sure your doing it because your first love is music, and because you love the art of creating music. If you're main goal is making a living or making big money than you might be better off getting a degree in accounting!

Many bands are now re-recording old albums for all kinds of reasons. If you weren't able to get the rights to re-issue *Grieve*, would that have been a consideration? What is your opinion on re-recording old albums?

No, we would not even have considered it. If another entity (i.e.: record company) bought *Grieve*, there is

little we could have done about it. I don't believe we would have had a whole lot of say with the re-issue if someone else owned it. Which is why we are glad to have the rights, because James and I really felt like we did justice to the re-release. We wanted to make sure it was done correctly. The new art work design and the sound re-mastering were very important pieces to both of us. After the discs were re-mastered, we would meet, go to Star Bucks, sip coffee, and listen to it from a listener's perspective in our cars. We really wanted to make sure people could hear the difference. And I think our listeners will be quite pleased with Brian Webster's re-mastering work. He did an excellent job. We were blown away on how he treated the project because musically, one can hear sounds and separations of the music you could not hear before.

Our opinion on re-recording old albums is we think it's fine to do it once, but get it right the first time. Multiple re-issues of the same album seems a little greedy to us. We really don't agree with the current sales tactic trend that seems to triple dip into consumers' pockets every few years to get them to buy the pretty much the same album with an occasional tweak here and there.

What are some of your favorite memories from being in Sincerely Paul? You wanted your lyrics to get people to think, to remove masks, etc. Do you have any stories about how they did just that?

Some of our favorite memories of Sincerely Paul were doing live shows... especially the big festivals (Creation Fest and Cornerstone) and playing the major Hollywood Clubs (the Whiskey, the Roxy, the Troubadour). We have always been a "people person" band, and loved meeting fans and listeners after the shows. We had a rigorous rehearsal schedule, practicing at least 3 nights a week, staying up past midnight, and having to get up the next morning to go to our regular jobs. We have a joke about the correlation between weekly rehearsals and live shows. "For every 50 hours of practice and rehearsals, you may get one really good live show that stands apart from the others". The point being that it's a lot of hard work to practice on a regular basis, and you may have some live shows that don't live up to expectations.

The lyrics.....they still are a big topic for discussion to this day. Moreover, some of the emails we received from listeners who tracked us down thru the internet were people who wanted to share their personal stories with us. This occurred frequently when the band was together – as people used to snail mail us their stories to our P.O. Box. One story recently came from a married couple who told us *Grieve* saved their marriage from crumbling into divorce. Another story

came from an individual stating she literally broke down after hearing *Grieve* saying the lyrics helped her deal with repressed childhood abuse issues. Still, another came from an out of state D.J. that used to play our songs on his radio station. He wrote to tell us that the lyrics finally got him to seek out help for severe depression and problems with addictions. Those are just a few of many stories we have received. We must admit, it still amazes us to this day to hear stories like this from our listeners. It does appear, in some ways, *Grieve* was a source of healing, or rather, the beginning of healing, for some of our listeners.

How do you feel about the music industry's (CCM or mainstream) attitudes towards expressing faith in music? What are your personal feelings about that?

Wow, that's a powerful question. And let me preface first that between 1994 to roughly 2008, we really have not followed what has happened in the CCM circles. And we say that with all honesty. Revisiting Sincerely Paul after all these years reminds us of that 1960's Twilight Zone episode with Burgess Meredith — you know, his character played a book worm that loved to read, and suddenly, there was this explosion that took place, and he walked up from the basement to the outside dwellings only to find a nuclear bomb had gone off and destroyed nearly everything in sight. It kind of feels that way, because here we are returning to some of our musical roots, and we have found that a lot of stuff in the Christian market has changed.... mostly due to technology, how people obtain music, the fall of many record companies, and with time comes the normal aging process.... bands get older, new younger bands come into fruition.... so yeah, things appear to have really changed or are just non-existent anymore. In our opinion, expressing faith in music is a personal decision. If that's what you want to sing about great, if not, that's fine also. But we have never been big fans on how the Christian market tries to separate itself from the secular market. Believe us when we say, from a business perspective, THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE. Sorry if that sounds harsh, and people may not want to hear it, but that was what our experience was like...in fact, we found people in the secular industry to be more honest and forthcoming in their approach... In the beginning stages of the band, Sincerely Paul's biggest mistake was trying to fit into the Christian mold. We were rejected by the Christian Music Machine when we did not submit to a lot of the rules and regulations. That is, until Blonde Vinyl Records came along. Bottom line, be a musician first, and if faith is part of your message, great. But don't let your faith pigeon hole you into musically expressing yourself to just one specific audience.



Rick McDonough / Hidden From Blackout

Interview and photographs by Michael Knott

Rick McDonough has been my friend for many years now. He's helped me record several projects including the *All Indie E.P.*, *Struck Last May - 16 Flowers*, the latest Windy Lyre record. He is also currently playing on – and engineering – the new L.S. Underground record, as well as my next solo release entitled *Even Star*. In the meantime, Rick has found enough time to record his first solo album under the name of Hidden From Blackout entitled *Breakups and Fur Coats*.

M: So let's get right to it then, what does Hidden From Blackout mean?

R: The Hidden From Blackout name came from a P.J. Harvey record where she says "I was in need of help, hidden to blackout" and it just struck me at the time. It was actually my favorite song on the record. I remember the song had these sparse verses with piano panned left and right, and then went into this glorious big sounding chorus with vocals that would wrap around and embrace you. It made me take notice and left me wanting more, and then "hidden to blackout" just evolved into Hidden From Blackout. I'm sure all the kids are listening to P.J. Harvey these days, aren't they?

M: I know you've been doing music for many, many years and been in several bands over the years. How long have you actually been doing music?

R: Since I was 13. I saved up enough money to purchase my first guitar, an acoustic Gibson Hummingbird knock-off. I was so proud of it even though it had a bend in the neck and would buzz on the 4th and 12th frets. I think I handed that guitar down to my brother, eventually.

M: You're from the D.C. area, isn't that right?

R: Yeah, I always say Washington D.C.

M: What is that the proper way, the east coast way, or is it like calling San Francisco "Frisco?" Why do you specify Washington D.C.?

R: Technically, I'm from Arlington, Virginia, but I don't really want to associate myself with a cemetery right now.

M: Yeah, not yet. I may soon, but not you.

R: No, when I first came to Southern California, while going to university, people would ask where I was from. The first few times I proudly announced "Arlington, Virginia". I started getting questions like "why don't you speak with a southern accent?" and "do your parents fly the rebel flag?" I quickly realized that the people I was interacting with had no idea where Arlington actually was. Sure, it's south of the Mason-Dixon line, but it's still a suburb of D.C. I proceeded to tell people I was from Washington D.C., instead, which sounds quite different to those who may be more geographically challenged. Anyway, it's all about perception I suppose.

M: Yeah. So, the title of the record is *Breakups and Fur Coats*. That's got a really nice ring to it, what is that all about?

R: It pretty much just came to me one day in the fall. It was overcast and chilly out, and I tend to get reflective and sentimental when the weather's like that. I was thinking of a friend's relationship, which led me to consider a former relationship of my own. Anyway, I decided to call this instrumental song that I was working on that day "Breakups and Fur Coats." The emotion I was trying to convey though the music was that of one attempting to achieve comfort, kind of like me wanting a fur coat that autumn day. I know it's kind of cheesy, but what are you going to do? Cheese is good in moderation anyway. Well, a few months down the road I decided the title deserved something more, and it ended up as the name of the record instead. Amid momentary frustrations, pains, challenges, and struggles that can come upon us there is always comfort if you seek it out. If you can grab a hold of your perspective and search for positive and comforting things, such reassurance is waiting for you like a big, warm, comfortable fur coat.

M: Great. Well, obviously I've heard the record, I love it, and you were kind enough to ask me to mix it with you, so thank you.

R: No, thank you.

M: Let's move on, what kind of music would you call your stuff, or how would you describe it?

R: That's a good question. I suppose every musician struggles when attempting to classify his own music, or put it into a category and box it up. I kind of see it as a melancholy cinematic experience but with the visual aspect playing out in your imagination. I would describe it with words like emotional, reflective, melodic, fluid, and textured. It's emotional and I think it evokes emotion. It's got hints of indie, emo, ambient, lo-fi, down-tempo, alternative, ambient, but yet it's not specifically any of these styles either. With most of the songs on this record I started out writing on guitar, and then they evolved from there. I would often deconstruct them and build them back up on electric guitar. There are vocals on some of the songs, but they play more of a supportive role a lot of the time as opposed to being the emphasis. It's not like they are completely buried in the mix, but they are more like another instrument carrying out their melody, playing their part towards the whole.

M: I think it's so surreal and dissident. It really has so many different layers and diverse emotions going on at the same time that overlap and are nicely interwoven within each other. I think if people slow down and soak in it that they will just love it.

Ok, so who in the WASHINGTON D.C. area influenced you and the way you perceived music when you were growing up? Is there one band from D.C. that really moved you, or you would go out of your way to see there in a club, if you were even old enough to get into a club?

R: If I had to pick one band it would probably have to be Fugazi.

M: What did, or do, you appreciate about Fugazi?

R: I love their honesty and their intensity. Those guys always hit me in the gut and leave me craving more. I definitely resonated with them on an emotional level as a youngster, and

I still do. They rock in an anti-rock sort of way.

M: Are there any other bands from your youth that may have impacted you or may have had a significant influence on you?

R: I would have to say that the Beach Boys were huge for me. I remember sitting listening to some of the arrangements and layers of vocal melodies on vinyl and later cassettes, and just being blown away. I think when I was like 10 or 11 I had accumulated over 30 Beach Boys records. The way that Brian Wilson placed sounds was simply brilliant. I really think they helped shape my ear for melody and arrangement at an early age.

M: Are there any other big influences when you were younger?

R: I really got into Kraftwerk at one point. I wasn't Mr. Electronic guy, but they did some pretty crazy stuff. I remember being both scared and intrigued as these German guys would do these futuristic synthesized soundscapes with occasional lyrics interjected into the music; it wasn't like anything else. I think the fact that they were from Germany added to the mystique for me too. Germany was this far off, abstract place, kind of like the future.

M: Didn't they play Coachella a few years ago?

R: Yeah, I had the pleasure to see them that year, I think it was 2005. It was one of the most exciting shows I saw that year even though they didn't move around very much. They just stood there the whole time in their suits, standing behind these podiums with keyboards and samplers. The podiums were identical, as was their attire. There was something pretty powerful about how minimalistic it all was, and that concept coincided with the music well. Then, with the lights out they had these tiny tie clasps with little red blinking lights. Every once and a while they would really get into a keyboard part, and then quickly return back to attention, behind the podium. They also had this screen behind them and speakers in the front, back, and middle of the tent providing this sort of surround sound set up. In particular, I remember it being pretty cool on Trans Europe Express, as visually they had vintage footage of these European cars from the 40's and 50's on the Autobahn, that, coupled with the sound of the cars through the speakers, provided for a very cool experience. Also, just the fact that I was able to see them that year was pretty amazing, I think it was one of two or three U.S. shows they played that year.

M: That sounds really cool. How about modern artists? Who do you like? Who influences you now?

R: There's a lot of modern music that I appreciate. A few modern artists I appreciate include Yo La Tengo, Sufjan Stevens, Ms. John Soda, Boards of Canada, Beck, Mogwai, The Octopus Project, Passengers, Mum, Explosions in the Sky, The American Analog Set, and I could probably go on and on.

I would have to say that one of the biggest modern influences would have to be Sigur Ros. They are powerful, often very sound-scapey, textured, and always emotionally engaging. I also appreciate the fact that they have been able to be true to their creativity while still achieving a certain amount of commercial success, too. That's a pretty hard thing to accomplish. A lot of times it's sad because the music and art is compromised in order to obtain recognition, self glorification, or money. It's a tough balance, and easy for people to lose focus, putting other goals above the art and music, but not with Sigur

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Ros, and I respect that. I also love that I can resonate and relate on an emotional level with their music without even knowing what they are saying. Beyond that, it's pretty wild that they created their own dialect too.

M: So they've been a musical influence, but you haven't come up with your own language, though.

R: No—not yet, but it's not out of the question.

M: Yeah, that's a little tough, and maybe too time consuming.

R: I also don't have the influence of the frigid Icelandic weather. Maybe that environment could help me create my own language as well.

M: I understand it's a really beautiful place.

R: It looks like it is from what I've seen. I'd like to go there and have a drink in an igloo or something like that.

M: Yeah, I think they have ice hotels there don't they?

R: If they do I trust there's no fireplace.

M: So now let's talk about some of the instrumentation that you are using in order to achieve such a surreal and emotional sound, or presence. What are you using? You don't have to tell us all the secrets, but how do you create this experience?

R: That's a hard one to pin down as I often try to be as sensitive to the song or idea as possible. I try to tune into the emotion, or emotions, and in a sense, allow the emotion to guide me as to what sounds they want to be matched up with. Each one is really an individual.

Like I mentioned earlier many of the songs do start out on guitar as that's a very relatable instrument for me. So, obviously I use guitars, and I just kind of layer from there. Then, when using effects I tend to gravitate towards softer things like reverb and delay, but again it varies from song to song.

M: Were you starting out with electric or acoustic guitar?

R: A lot of times it was acoustic, and then I would revisit the song on electric. Guitar was the foundation for most of this recording, and typically I would layer and build from there using keyboards, samples, lap steel, etc. Whatever texture or sound that seemed to work with the emotional idea that I was working towards, I put the song above all else and worked to support it to the best of my ability. I tend to approach each idea, each emotion, and each song individually, so it does really depend. I really just try to be as honest and as sensitive to the music as I can be, so I can support it to the best of my ability.

M: Well, let's talk about some of those songs. I know this is a pretty tough one, but apparently one of the songs you wrote for this record was about a SWAT officer who was killed about a

year ago.

R: That's right, one of the songs was about the first SWAT officer killed in the line of duty in the U.S., actually here in Los Angeles. His name was Officer Randal Simmons, and the second song on the record was inspired by his life.

M: And what is that song called?



R: "41-D," which I believe was how he was identified when he was on the radio, on duty. I heard about the stand-off on the news, and remember hearing that in the end he was slain. Once I started hearing more about who he was I really wanted to honor his life through the music and try to reflect what an incredible man he was. It's sad in that he passed, but it's ultimately an uplifting reflection of inspiration through his life. He was a real hero who served on the LAPD to protect your average person in the community for nearly 30 years. He was also very active within the community helping to instill confidence in kids and keep them off the streets through ministry for like 11 years. It's a real shame we had to lose such a great man who genuinely cared for those people around him,

but his life is an inspiration to me and many countless others I'm sure.

M: I think that song is wonderful. It has a sad and melancholy feel, but yet I can hear hope within it as well. The chorus seems almost triumphant to me. What a way to honor his family too.

Alright, let's talk about another song that I think that's really great too, it has something to do with space. Isn't that right?

R: Yes, there is a song on the record called Space.

M: Explain that one.

R: A little while back, I think in the spring of 2007, I was watching the Today show.

M: Shame on you!

R: I know, right?

M: Just kidding.

R: I was watching it and they did this story on Hawking, Dr. Steven Hawking. He is a mathematician and physicist who has done a lot of research on cosmology and black holes, and things like that. Unfortunately, he has some sort of neurological disorder that has left him mostly, if not entirely, paralyzed. He even talks by this sensor that is on his voice box, or something like that. He's a super intelligent fellow with a brilliant mind. Anyway, apparently some millionaire who was a fan of Hawking decided to treat him to this airplane ride so that he could experience zero gravity. That way Hawking would know how it would feel if he could actually experience going to space. So they took him up in this plane, and there was this footage of them spinning him in zero gravity. He can't express a lot of emotion because of his disorder, but you could see the joy just gleaming from his eyes in that moment. It completely overwhelmed me to see this, in fact, I'm getting goose bumps talking about it right now! Here you have this guy with this amazing mind who has been physically afflicted by this awful disease, bound to a wheel chair for life and regardless, he's able to experience extreme joy. I mean how can I complain about not having the latest iPod, or sitting in traffic, or anything? Really, where do I get off complaining? If he can experience joy like that, why can't I experience such joy in the simply daily things in my own life? I can. I mean I don't have the challenges that he does, but it's a tremendous example of perspective, and that guy is right on.

M: One of the parts of the song just exclaims "pure joy", isn't that right? I think that's a pretty powerful part of the song.

R: Yeah, and that's what I saw on his face, and there's no reason why I can't have joy like that.

M: So, how is it working with Michael Knott?

R: No comment.

M: Ok Rick, there's one other song I wanted to ask you about. It's a really uplifting number, the first one on the record, called "As Noon." Could you give us a little information on that one?

R: Sure. The inspiration for that song really came from watching a good friend find his bride. It was awesome to witness him experience such happiness and comfort in

discovering her. At the time I was reading Ernest Hemmingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, and at the beginning of one of the chapters he is describing this fiesta with these explosions and this magnificent visual display. When I was reading that it made me think of the emotional explosions my friend was experiencing in his life, and how wonderful it was for me to watch all this unfold. What a celebratory time for him, and certainly worthy of such fireworks. He found his soul mate, he found true love, and how brilliant is that! In essence, that's what I was trying to capture emotionally.

M: That's great! I heard that you may be doing a video for that song as well. If you do will you share it on YouTube or something like that?

R: I do have a vision for a video for that song that I hope to put out, and it will be available. Hopefully we can get started on it in the next couple of weeks, so we'll see.

M: I look forward to seeing it.

So let me toss out a few words in an to attempt to describe your music and see if you agree with them: emotional, dissident, melancholy. Is melancholish a word?

R: If it isn't we are at liberty to make it one.

M: Well, you got a degree in English Literature didn't you? You should know.

R: Are you not comfortable with my melancholyism? Is that a clinical disorder? If so, I doubt that it's curable.

M: In your case you're probably right. Moving on, another descriptive word for your music could be reflective, right?

R: Absolutely, I would agree with all of those descriptions.

M: While your music seems to be all of these things, there are parts that are quite joyful. Part of it seems to flow wherever the emotion wants to flow. I really do enjoy this record, and I was excited to have had a part in it so that it can get out and connect with others. I'm happy to be interviewing you as well to promote it as I feel it is an important record, and that people need to hear and experience it.

I have a question that I like to ask every artist that I interview. Now you being the first artist that I've ever interviewed I will ask you the question, I will ask you the question I've never asked anyone because I've never interviewed anyone else. Do you have a good story from or about the music industry, maybe something that you experienced or witnessed? It could be good, bad, funny, or indifferent. Do you have something to share? I think everyone has something to share about the industry, or a specific experience. Do you have anything like that?

R: I think I might have one. Well, it involves this guy by the name of Michael Knott...

M: No, no, no. Not including me. That's why I'm doing this interview.

R: If that's the case then I don't know if I've got anything for you.

M: Come on, I know you've got something.



This image by Brenda Clark, Rick's wife.

R: I tend to try to go to SXSW each year if I can as I love SXSW. This one year I went to go see Goldfrapp, Ray Davies, and Morrissey all at the same venue on the same night. It was a pretty cool line up. After watching Goldfrapp, who put on a good show by the way, I had the chance to get back stage. As I recall, Morrissey was supposed to go on next and Ray Davies was to follow, but Davies was a secret show or something. Someone back stage, I think it was Allison Goldfrapp, had ordered and brought barbecue wings or something like that. Morrissey had a slight problem with that. Apparently he doesn't like meat, who knew? I guess meat is murder. Anyway, he started verbally going at Goldfrapp, and Ray Davies got into the middle of it. After debriefing with a friend who books shows, apparently Morrissey doesn't ever want any meat present at the venue that he is playing, and he strictly forbids it.

M: Wow! So what happened?

R: I thought it was going to come down to blows or something.

M: You thought they were going to start punching each other?

R: Yeah, and Davies totally stood up for Goldfrapp as he thought she should have whatever she wanted. Then Davies got so upset that he didn't want to go on after Morrissey.

M: So Davies didn't play?

R: Nope, he did not play.

M: You didn't get to hear Lola?

R: No, it was a bummer as I am a fan of the Kinks. I did get to see Morrissey though, and he put on a good show. I was excited to see him do Girlfriend in a Coma in particular. I suppose it's as close to the Smiths as I'm ever going to get live.

M: Wow, now that's a good story!

R: It does make for a good story, doesn't it?

M: Well Rick, I'm really impressed by your record, the first solo project released by Rick McDonough with one of the coolest titles I've heard on a record lately, *Breakups and Fur Coats*. Can you just tell us briefly any other projects that you may be involved with since you seem as busy as me?

R: Well, obviously I'm working on finalizing your L.S. Underground project.

M: Thank you.

R: It's an amazing record and I'm really thankful to be part of it. It's really going to impact a lot of people in a positive way. Then, we're also working on your next solo project *Even Star*, which is equally amazing in a very different way. We still have the sophomore release of *Struck Last May* as well which should be a little bit easier for some to digest.

M: I think you're right as it's not quite as experimental as *16 Flowers*.

R: Yeah, maybe it's like turning it back from 10 to something like 7.5 or 8 on the experimental dial.

I'm also trying to wrap up a project with a buddy of mine that I've worked with for years who has the most amazing voice. We did a few songs together under the name *While Rome is Burning*. It's a two person studio project based on textures, guitars, loops, hooks, and things like that. Then, you have this ethereal sort of hauntingly beautiful vocals that just engulf you. For these songs I presented him with poetry that he would then rework into lyrics. I don't want to belabor the point, but he has such an amazing voice.

M: He does, and his name is...

R: Peter Kusek. He's a crazy talented guy, and I'm grateful to be able to work with him. If I had to pick someone's voice that I appreciate the most it would probably have to be Peter.

M: He does have an amazing voice, I agree completely.

R: It's going to be a 5 to 7 song e.p., and it's a pretty exciting collection of songs. I also just started a keyboard-based project. I'm tossing around a couple of ideas as to what I am going to call it, but haven't settled on one as of this moment. They are textured sound scapes that you could have playing in the background, or like something that you would hear in an indie film, something along those lines. I hope to have that out later this year as well. Then, I'm also playing with a cool indie rock band called *Paravell*. A friend of mine that I went to university with is the main song writer and front man.

M: Do you guys play out?

R: Yes, we typically try to play a couple of shows a month here locally in Orange County. We have a record out, and we are working on several new songs that we are going to start recording here shortly. I'm pretty excited about that too. I think the songs are really relatable and going to impact people in a good way.

M: Now tell me how people can get a hold of your new record and what it costs.

R: I have it for sale online at hiddenfromblackout.com and its \$14.00 with shipping in the U.S. or Canada.

M: A lot of people may not know that you also do painting, photography, writing, all sorts of other creative things aside from the music. Do you ever sell

your paintings and photography?

R: I do, but right now it's more word of mouth.

M: How would someone go about trying to purchase one of your pieces? Would they just have to come to your house?

R: They could by appointment, or during happy hour which is 4-6. Right now I just have a photography blog up that briefly goes over the projects I'm working on or have been hired out for. I hope to display my photography and my paintings that I have for sale soon, but I'm working on it right now. People can get to the photo blog from the *Hidden From Blackout* site.

M: You are a talented photographer. Your paintings are great, too. I know one of your last series was a Napa Valley series of the vineyards there. How many did you paint in that series?

R: I did something like 14 in that series, but I'd say that less than half of them are officially finished. Isn't that typical for an artist, nothing is ever finished.

M: Maybe you'll have it set up for people to see those paintings in the next month or two?

R: I hope I can at least get a link up that connects from the *Hidden From Blackout* site.

M: Well thanks Rick, in conclusion is there anything else that you would like to say?

R: I can't think of anything aside from thanks, brother.



THE SOUND GALLERY

HERB GRIMAUD JR.

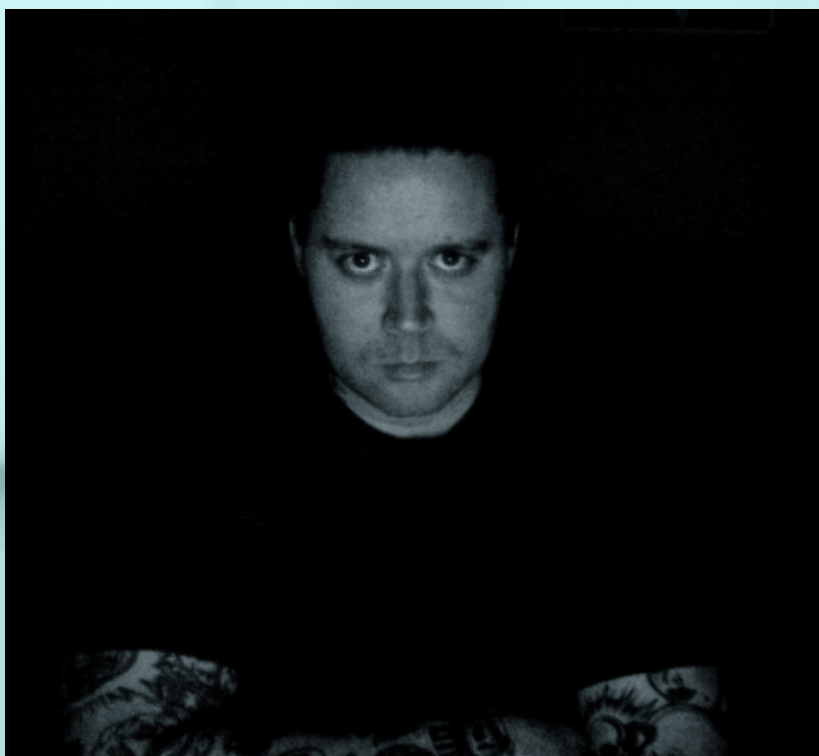
By Steve Ruff

Herb Grimaud Jr. has the best list of musical influences that I have ever seen on MySpace. He has great taste in movies and he's covered up in tattoos. I was glad to catch up to him and talk to him about several things – including his band The Sound Gallery, his wife Leslie Dupre-Grimaud and one of our favorite musicians, Nick Cave. Herb might best be remembered by readers here from being the bass player in The Violet Burning from 1998 until early 2002. He played on 4 of the Violet's albums including *Plastic & Elastic*, *A Stranger In This Place*, *Faith And Devotions Of A Satellite Heart* and *This Is The Moment*. Before he ever played with the Violet's though, he had been around the scene for years. His first band was Nowhere Close, followed by Raspberry Jam – which he started with Wes Faulk from Nowhere Close after he got married in 1991. Herb also played in The Kreeptowns prior to and after the release of their one album *Take A Spin*. In addition he's also played with Michael Knott and played and recorded with Café Noire, a band that his wife Leslie was in.

The Sound Gallery is one of the most unique projects that I have come across in the last year. Herb is the sole member, and his MySpace page describes the music as “ambient, experimental, noisy and sometimes beautifully out of tune.” He has put out three different recordings, *Designed For Reading* followed by *Phos* and rounded out by my favorite *Umbra*. I would describe the music as a lush landscape of sonic intrigue. It is ambience that is dreamy, undefined and relevant. I go into my office, pop a disc in, turn it up really loud and just kind of float into the music. This is the kind of stuff that bleeds emotion.

I asked Herb about how the band came about. “While in the Violets I started working on my own material, mostly to see what I had in me. I knew I wanted to stay away from traditional structure and bass playing. I wasn't happy doing music with the Violets anymore and I wanted to see if the ideas I had would help me get excited again. The first real step to making it all happen was quitting the Violets and asking Eric Campuzano, Jan Johansen and Sarah Hepburn if they would be willing to hear a few tracks I was working on. I wanted to see if they had any ideas they wanted to contribute. When they said ‘yes’ I knew I had to actually work on this, they had called my bluff. From that point I started asking a few more friends to be a part of what would later become *Designed For Reading*. In my opinion, the best moments of that record are what everyone contributed.”

Each recording from Sound Gallery is unique in its own way. In asking Herb about what he liked about them individually he said, “As simple as it sounds, the strong point of each release for me is that I achieved exactly what I was going for. I was able to say what I wanted to say musically with each one. On *Designed For Reading* I wanted this to be in the idea of “This Mortal Coil” in the sense that I had different musicians come in and add their take on the material. My favorite parts of the record are the performances they did. *Phos* was written for my brother-in-law who got me into dark ambient music. A friend of his died and this was a small way of saying I was sorry. I wanted to convey three emotions, one with each track –



sadness, anger and hope. This record was primarily guitar and bass which was another goal I set out for myself. I did do a little keyboard and a very short drum beat at the end of the track “Phos III”, but the rest was guitar and bass as the source. As a listener, *Umbra* is my favorite. In the dark ambient genre I feel *Umbra* could hold its own. To me it sounds very spacious and claustrophobic at the same time. This is one to listen to with headphones on.”

Herb's history is long and varied in the music scene, and the future is looking good as well. His next work will be him playing on his wife's upcoming release. His wife, Leslie Dupre-Grimaud, has also been in the scene for many years. Leslie was in Café Noire which unfortunately has not been together for some time, but you really need to check out their MySpace page and listen to the tracks there. She also did the song “Monica”, which appeared on the Metro One compilation “Hi”, with Steve Hindalong, Derri Daughtery, Tim Chandler and Chris Colbert all playing on the track. In addition she has done vocals on a who's who of bands including The Violet Burning, The Prayer Chain, At The Foot Of The Cross Vol.1, Raspberry Jam, Honey, The Kreeptowns and The Sound Gallery.

About Leslie's upcoming release Herb says, “I'm really excited about this project. It's been a long time coming and we're finally giving her material the proper treatment it deserves. We did some demo takes at our home studio in 2005, but I'm not the right man for the job when it comes to her work. Andy Prickett approached us and we started laying down the parts. I've already done some bass and a little keyboards... we're taking it slow due to schedules. It's basically Andy, Leslie and myself. It's her songs and her vision under the direction of Andy who is the producer and engineer. We're not working towards a release date at this time, my guess and goal is for this year. Andy is working on a project that will keep him busy for one to three months, after that we will be hitting the studio more frequently. Her MySpace page will be updated with photos and any new information as it unfolds. We will probably release it one track at a time, that's how we're recording it. I think the tracks will be available through Northern Records. You can



listen to the four demo tracks we did, plus the song she did with The Choir guys at her MySpace page.”

With the last Sound Gallery release being from 2007, I asked Herb about the possibility of any upcoming releases and if they would be in the same vein as the last three. “I don’t have anything ‘on tape’ at the moment. I’ve switched from PC to Mac so I’m going through the learning curve right now. Not very inspiring, but I have some ideas spinning around in my head. I have a friend who designs and builds analog modules for a living and I would like to see what I can come up with using that kind of gear. I want the next Sound Gallery release to have a *Umbra* feel with some sequencing, a few beats and definitely some serious modulation. I also have this idea of doing a Halloween soundtrack. Every time Halloween rolls around I’m looking for a good scary sounds CD and they all fall short. It would probably be more for myself and a few friends, but it’s an idea I’ve toyed with for some time and would have great fun doing it. It’s on the ‘to do’ list.”

Speaking of Halloween brings me to Herb’s brilliant list of influences. I read his MySpace page and thought to myself, wow – this guy’s list is amazing! I definitely share the list of bands and movies with him. He thinks that Boris Karloff was a genius, and we both share interest in Nick Cave and his unparalleled catalog of work. In asking him what influences him these days he said, “I’m guilty when it comes to long lists of music, but there isn’t anything that’s influencing me in a musical sense currently. The last thing that really affected my music was when my brother-in-law introduced me to “Lustmord“. It had a huge impact on The Sound Gallery. Music became interesting to me again, but that was about five or six years ago. There are musicians out there doing some great music that I still am moved by but aren’t necessarily an influence on my music: Wovenhand, Cat Powers, Grinderman, I Love You But Have Chosen Darkness, Ceremony M83, Nine Inch Nails, Seerena Maneesh, Ladytron, and anything Cyclic Law puts out is always worth checking out. “

Speaking of long music lists, he cites a ton of old school punk rock bands as influences. Seeing the list begged the question was he ever going to put out a punk record. His response was keen, funny and informative. He said, “I’ve already done three of them as The Sound Gallery. To me punk is a philosophy, not a sound or a style. It was a fantastic movement that (like all great ideas) ended up getting whored out and boxed into something that you buy at Hot Topic. As far as a ‘white heat’ feel that people like Minor Threat, The Clash and The Birthday Party did, I’m not in that place. Even those artists are not expressing themselves in that way, but there is no doubt that Ian Mackaye or Nick Cave are not punk rock. I would highly recommend people checking out John Lydon’s book “Rotten – No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs” and watching the documentary “Joe Strummer: The Future Is Unwritten.” The truth is out there.

When it comes to the digital age of music I was interested in Herb’s opinion due to the fact that I found out about his band, and purchased his CD’s through his MySpace page. I asked him how he thought the digital age had impacted and influenced the scene, and whether or not he felt that was positive or negative. He responded, “I like the entire digital movement, from the way records can be made now all the way down to downloading music. From a recording aspect I find it easier and not so costly

doing it on a computer, but I must admit there’s something wonderful about recording in an actual studio with tape. I think the impact it’s made for the scene and the music world in general is it allows the musician to be more hands on. It’s more punk rock that way. A lot more people can have a home studio and take their time. If I want to work on an idea that I get and its three AM, I can just turn on my machine, plug in whatever instrument and go. However, it will never replace shooting pool at the Green Room with friends who stop by while you’re working on something. The only real negative I see is there’s no real sense of community anymore. Everyone, at some point, in Southern California recorded at the Green Room. You felt like you were a part of something, if only for that moment, while laying down your tracks. With everyone having a home studio, you eliminate that sense of community. The guys at Northern still have that sense of community which is great. I’ve seen Prickett and Campuzano more recently because of the recording we’re doing for Leslie than I have all of last year.”

So, check out The Sound Gallery! I would recommend buying all three albums, but if you don’t have the coins for all three then I would get *Umbra* first followed by the other two. Just make sure that you do get all three. Listening very loud is also recommended, perhaps the best way to listen is with headphones because there is a lot going on that you don’t want to miss.

Links:

www.myspace.com/thesoundgallery
www.myspace.com/lesliedupregriamud
www.myspace.com/grimaud
www.myspace.com/cafenoire
www.myspace.com/raspberryjamoceanic

MOTONAUT

Mike Indest and the electro pop journey

By Steve Ruff



If memory serves me correctly, I first came across Motonaut on MySpace. I think they liked the influences on our music list and mentioned something about Mike Knott. I can't really remember, but I liked their music and added them to our friends list. Probably about a month later Matt emailed me and asked if I wanted to review the CD they had sent us, I said 'sure' and he mailed it to me. When I got the disc in the mail I popped it in and thought this was quite possibly one of the best indie discs that I have heard in a long time. I was pleasantly surprised. I buy a good bit of indie stuff from bands that I find on MySpace, but rarely am I as pleased as with Motonaut. The disc is entitled *The Now And The Not Yet*, and my only complaint is that it isn't longer. We reviewed the disc in an earlier edition of Down The Line, and this is one that you should check out and support. You can find the review in the archives section of our little zine! So, back to the band...

Motonaut is Mike Indest and Jesse Maizlish. Mike handles vocals and all the music/programming, and Jesse adds vocals that support and gel really well with Mike. I asked Mike how the music came together, and here's the scoop. "I really wanted to do something different. I wrote the songs on the guitar and recorded some of the songs with guitar, bass, drums, piano, etc. but I was kind of burnt out with standard arrangements, so I started looking for a way to do it a bit different. I had actually tried adding some different things to those recordings, stuff like accordion, melodica and exotic percussion, but it still was not exciting me. So I decided to go the opposite direction and use limited instrumentation."

The limited instrumentation works well. This is a disc that on first spin was really hard to classify, but I guess the 'electro pop' tag works well. The lyrics are really thought provoking and deeper than the standard fare. So, how did the band come together? Mike explains, "Well originally it was just me. The more the songs started to come together I started to figure out where I wanted to go with it. The lyrics were kind of open and direct, maybe a little sad, and the music was fun and upbeat, so I decided to work with those differences and play it out a bit more. I recorded my vocals really dry and upfront against the techno music, and Jesse's vocals added an ethereal contrast to mine." While Mike calls the music techno, it is not techno in the sense of Joy Electric or Dance House Children. The music here is minimal and almost a vehicle to carry the lyrics along. Mike continues, "So I brought Jesse on board because with the ReBirth program I had two mono synths, two drum machines and this idea to have contrast with the arrangements. I had known Jesse for a while, and I knew she sang, but I had never heard her sing except for singing along with songs at the art gallery where she worked. I played some demos for her and she was into it. She came over for about an hour one afternoon, we knocked out 'Gravity', it sounded great and away we went."

When it comes to influences, their lists are long and as varied as they come. Mike is a huge fan of Michael Knott as we said earlier, but he's also into The Alarm, The Choir, 77's, Terry Taylor, 441, Undercover, Waterboys and Pedro The Lion. Jesse is more influenced by hip hop and a slathering of groups like Snow Patrol, Iron & Wine, Madonna, Talking Heads, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Prince, Modest Mouse, etc. The influence list is long and diverse, but the mish mash of what moves them comes out in a nice way.

When Mike is not playing music, he holds down two diverse jobs. One is doing the morning show at a local Christian music station. His other job is no surprise since he lives in the 9th ward in New Orleans. His second job: he is part owner in a walking tour company in the French Quarter. They do ghost, cemetery and voodoo tours. The radio job he has been working for 15 years. I, for one, thought it would be pretty cool to have a ghost/cemetery tour job, but then again I am a fanatical horror movie fan (much to my wife's dismay). Anyway, as Mike puts it, "The tour company is fun. I just started a spiritual history tour that is really thought provoking and engaging."

Since I met Mike through MySpace, I asked him how that website and the digital revolution have impacted Motonaut. "Having a very limited budget", Mike explains, "if it were not for the internet there would be no way we could have done this fifteen years ago. From mastering, getting CD's out, getting on Amazon, iTunes & Napster and mailing press kits to magazines, our total cost was about \$400.00 - that's amazing! MySpace seems to be the best marketing tool for us, the networking is amazing and finding an audience that you think might like what you're doing is fairly easy, although very time consuming. I have not got back any numbers from the digital distribution sites, but I have received emails from folks who bought the downloads and that is exciting. I'm not expecting to sell a bunch of copies, and that's not what this is about, but it is very cool to hear from someone in Montana that found us and bought the songs. That is something that never would have happened before the internet."

As I stated earlier, the only drawback to this disc was that I thought it was too short. So, what's in the future for Motonaut so we can hear some more music? Funny you should ask... "We are hoping to record a 7" over Mardi Gras, and then another E.P. soon after that", Mike states. "Musically the new stuff is a little bit different... more dissonant maybe, lyrically the new songs are more focused on failed, messed up relationships with people and not like *The Now And The Not Yet* that was focused on God. These songs are brutally honest and maybe a bit unnerving to listen to. I am trying to record two new songs for a 7" that a small indie label wants to put out. Hopefully we can get them done in time."

An update: Since Mike and I talked he has updated his MySpace page with a blog stating that he has finished writing the new E.P. Now comes the laborious task of programming and putting it all together. Looks like the hope is to have it out before summer ends. Check out all things Motonaut here: www.myspace.com/mikeindest

D - T - L LIVE REPORT

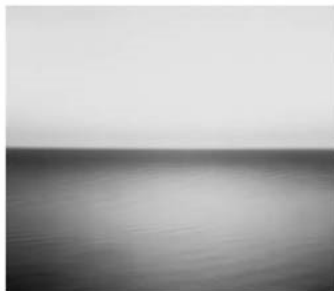
VIGILANTES OF LOVE
EDDIES ATTIC
DECATUR, GA
1-23-2009

I was anticipating this show for weeks! Vigilantes of Love is absolutely my favorite Americana band, I have grown up listening to Bill Mallonee and company in whatever line up was playing at the time. Bill retired the Vigilantes in 2002 after well over a decade of non-stop touring and a list of critically acclaimed records with very little commercial success. Those of you that are fans know the story well. Bill has released at least 8 (depending on how you count them) solo records since disbanding the Vigilantes, and released more demos than you can count for several years under the now defunct BillTunes service. I would argue that Bill's output is unparalleled and that there is no one out there that puts out the amount of music that he does, and definitely no one that puts out stuff this rich and well done.

So, on to the show... The Vigilantes had several different line ups during their career, and this is not a return to any past line up, this is a new, fresh crew with the only returning member besides Bill being Kevin Heuer on drums. The band is rounded out by Jon Guthrie on bass, A.J. Adams on pedal steel guitar, and Bill's wife Muriah Rose on vocal harmonies. This was only the 3rd show that these guys have played and it was spot on the entire night. The played a solid 14 song set with new tunes (String Of Pearls), old tunes (Welcome To Struggleville, Blister Soul) and tunes from Bill's solo catalog (Solar System, Flowers).

I have seen Bill numerous times through the years and it was great to see him backed here by the band and playing to a sold out crowd at Eddie's. Bill has somewhere close to 30 records to his name, and not a one of them disappoint. This band is the real deal - there is nothing else like them! Check out Bill's website where you can purchase this show as a download for only \$4.50, we cover it in the reviews section of the magazine as well. Bill also has most of his entire catalog up on his website for download. The prices are more than fair and the music doesn't get any better. He has his solo work, full band and his more recent WPA Volumes up and available. This is honest independent music, support it and enjoy!

www.billmallonee.net
www.myspace.com/billmallonee
www.myspace.com/worksprogressadministration



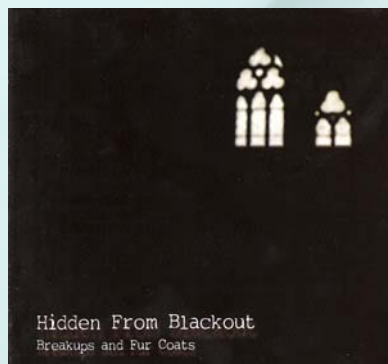
U2
NO LINE ON THE HORIZON
 2009 Interscope
 Purchase: U2.com
 Review by: Matt Crosslin

So you can hear this album on their MySpace page. The whole thing. And you've probably already decided whether to buy this album or not based solely on one factor – your opinion of Bono. Or maybe based on the hype surrounding the album in general. Let's face it – the hype is good, and Bono is often misunderstood. So does this album live up to its hype?

My opinion: a huge resounding yes. Some people have been disappointed that this album is not as experimental as they would like. Sorry, U2 didn't get as popular as they are by being Radiohead. They did it by being U2 – which means some change and experimentation with each album, along with some familiar elements. That is always what I have appreciated about them. There are some slight Middle Eastern influences on some songs. Not so much that you think you are listening to a Rai album, but some subtle ones here and there. But then a song like "Magnificent" comes ringing through with that familiar U2 sound and a big smile hits my face.

Even though I am one of those that get and appreciate Bono, I have to say there some occasional vocal moments that I would have changed if it were up to me. And as much as I like "Get On Your Boots," I have to admit that it sounds a bit too much like they are trying to make it sound like it is *not* "Vertigo."

Some have also said this is U2's most "Christian" album. I think you would have to have a pretty narrow view of what being a Christian means to say that. U2 has either been really bold in their beliefs, or really bold in mocking American culture (see *Pop or Zooropa*) – which I think is two things any Christian worth their salt would also be doing anyways. That has never changed since their first album – it's just a little more blatant here.



HIDDEN FROM BLACKOUT
BREAKUPS AND FUR COATS
 2009 Hill Deg Maria Records
HiddenFromBlackout.com
 Review by: Steve Ruff

Rick McDonough has finally released Hidden From Blackout's first album entitled *Breakups and Fur Coats*. I have been waiting on this for disc for a long time and I was excited when I dropped by the post this morning and found the disc there waiting. The anticipation has been growing, and let me say that even on just the first listen, I LOVE this album. The first song is 'As Noon' and it captured me right away... from the soft strumming of the acoustic guitar over the melancholy of the keyboards creating an atmosphere of gentleness and repose - the vocals are ethereal and haunting, but beautiful and sad in a desperate sort of way. This music evokes emotion, from the lump in my throat to the awakening of my heart... this is true beauty. Another stand out track that got me off first listen was 'Fade'. I can best describe it as beautiful, soothing and timeless, as if space were turned inside out. Each song here is like a journey, with free flowing forms and sonic backdrops that are full of melody and movement. Hidden From Blackout is an intangible journey from beginning to end. This disc is tenacious while still being delicate and is pleasure to the ears and the mind.

All of the words and music here is from Rick/Hidden From Blackout, but there are contributions from a couple other fine musicians. Christopher Bright from the bands A Movement Upwards and Paravell (where he also plays with Rick) contributes drums on 3 tracks. Michael Knott plays guitar on the song 'Space' as well as recording, mixing and producing along with Rick. This is a must buy record!



PALOMA
THE SPOOKY LOOP
 1999 Devaness Records
 Purchase: Amazon.com
 Review by: Steve Ruff

This is one of the best discs that you probably have never heard of. I came across this disc about 10 years ago in a Christian bookstore and bought it because the back cover has a picture of a billboard with John Lennon and Yoko Ono on it. I thought the photos were so cool that I bought the CD. This quickly became a favorite of mine, and I was pleasantly surprised that Gene Eugene was a guest vocalist on here. This is yet another record that was recorded at the Green Room. This band was put together by Chad Anderson, and I cover it here because I just recently found him on MySpace still making music under the name Roger Moon. Paloma came and went with no attention and I have never seen them covered anywhere else. You can find this disc on eBay or Amazon for cheap if it strikes your interest. The music can best be described as indie rock that borders on shoe gaze but never hits that heavy wall of distortion and sound. I think this record is amazing! The lyrics are deep, poetic and they seem to tell a story that always borders on the somewhat sad and melancholy. Anderson's voice is the perfect vehicle for this music as well. Check out what he is doing now on MySpace, and spend the coins on eBay or Amazon to get this gem that was unfortunately overlooked.

www.myspace.com/rogermoontheband



VIGILANTES OF LOVE LIVE AT EDDIES

2009 Independent

Purchase: BillMallonee.net

Review by: Steve Ruff

This download is the deal of the month for sure. This show was recorded at Eddie's Attic in Decatur, GA on January 23, 2009. This is straight from the soundboard to tickle your little ears. This one has 14 songs in total and is only \$4.50 - seriously, only \$4.50! Longtime fans of VoL will be happy with several of the oldies being played here including "Welcome To Struggleville", "Blister Soul", and "Skin". There are newer tunes here such as "String Of Pearls" that are given the full band treatment, and then there are favorites like "Flowers" and brit-pop classics such as "Solar System" that are covered as well. This was a great show, buy this download and help support the best Americana band that is out there! Also, check out our review of this show in the "Live Report" section.

www.billmallonee.net



CHARITY EMPRESSA THE SKIN OF WHIPPETS

2002 Velvet Blue Music

Purchase: VelvetBlueMusic.com

Review by: Steve Ruff

I'll be honest... I bought this CD without knowing anything at all about it. I didn't know who was in the band or what style of music this was. Not usually the way I buy music, but I bought this because Gerard did the cover artwork and I wanted to add this to my collection of Gerard related items. *The Skin Of Whippets* is a collaborative effort put on by Frank Lenz and Eric Campuzano. These two guys have an obvious long history in the music scene. Lenz has played with everyone under the sun, including Cush, SF59, Daniel Amos and Mortal just to name a few, as well as putting out several solo records. Campuzano was a member in The Prayer Chain & Cush, heads up Northern Records and plays in The Lassie Foundation. This disc has 7 tracks and clocks in at just under 40 minutes. This is ambient, shoe gazing at it's finest... the kind where you just sit back and let the music play – it drones, whines, cries and carries you far away into the place that you often find somewhere back between your dreams and the static in your mind. This record kind of encompasses all – sometimes it is minimal and other times it's dense. Sonically lush and never in a hurry to get somewhere you don't want to go, it is well worth the purchase.

www.velvetbluemusic.com



MONEY ON THE DEAD MONEY ON THE DEAD

2009 Independent

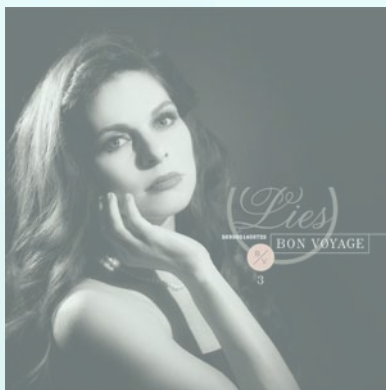
Purchase: MySpace.com

Review by: Matt Crosslin

My first reaction to listening to this album was that this would be a group that you would probably find on Brainstorm Records, if they still existed today. It is one of those albums that combines many of the elements that also influenced those bands from the BAI roster that you love, throws in a dash of other influences that you kind of think you know (but can't quite put your finger on), and then avoids doing anything over-done or imitative.

Money on the Dead is slightly quirky alternative music that is not too heavy or too mellow. In fact, I don't know if I hear much crunch at all. But there is still some diversity to the sounds you get here. I would like to hear a bit more diversity from song to song here, but it's not like they don't have any. I would say to just add a little more here and there, without going over board, to take the next album to the next level.

Let's see how they describe themselves on MySpace. "Pop / Rock / Powerpop." Hmm... yeah, I can agree with that. Was that an organ that just started off my favorite track ("Love What's Left") on this disc? Yep – nice touch – a quick hit and then on to a faster paced acoustic rock song. That is followed by the slightly-Beatles-influenced song "The Honesty Song." In fact, I think most of my favorite songs from this disc are up on their MySpace page as of now, except for the song "Shadowland." The guitar behind the chorus is brilliant. Oh, and there is some good crunch in the last song: "I'm Beginning to See the Morning." Overall, a solid effort – if you like what you hear on their MySpace page, you will like the whole album.



BON VOYAGE LIES

2008 Tooth & Nail Records
Purchase: ToothandNail.com
Review by: Matt Crosslin

In the beginning, Bon Voyage was an entirely different monster than Starflyer 59 (except for guitarist Jason Martin, of course). Then the two sounds of both bands started to drift together. Even though they still remain slightly different, Bon Voyage (featuring Jason's wife on vocals) and SF59 are now closer than ever. Someday, I think the only difference will be the gender of the lead vocalist. But that will be in about 10 years, as it seems to take that long for the Martins to release a couple of albums under the Bon Voyage moniker.

Jason Martin seems to be on a huge 80's kick recently. *Lies* could easily have been released in 1986. I can say that with authority as a child of the 80's. Even though we became known later by that whole odd "Gen-X" label, my generation was grooving to all those keyboard obsessed techno-rock songs of the mid-80s.

The songs on *Lies* are short and happy sounding. Even when she is singing about thinking she is a monster, you can almost see Julie Martin singing with a smile on her face.

Also, I have to point out that this is really not a full-length album. "Bad Dream" is really a different version (or maybe a re-mix?) of "Monster," and "Bad Friend" and "LTD" are both instrumentals that barely stretch to over a minute. In fact, while listening to "Bad Friend," I can't help but singing out loud "words are so very / unnecessary / they can only do harm." How long has it been since they last put out an album? And we only get 8 true full length songs? I think I only care because the songs are so, like, rockin' and retro that I totally want more.



SINCERELY PAUL GRIEVE

1991 Blonde Vinyl Records
SlideMusicGroup.com
Review by: Matt Crosslin

This album is being re-issued soon – probably in less that a week or so after you are reading this. So let's take a listen to the original first before we get a look at the re-issue next time.

I first heard *Grieve* when I was a recovering metal-head. So at that time, I gravitated towards songs like the title track, just due to their intensity. Or maybe it was just that freaky, cool sound going on in the background. Yes, there is intensity to this album that can attract fans of heavy music with an open mind. But there is so much more going on with this album.

You can tell from the opening track (appropriately titled "Open"), that the goal here is to be epic. I think they achieved that and more. This is moody, atmospheric music that will find fans among the gothic crowd as much as it will with the alternative crowd. As a bass player myself, I love how the bass guitar (and keyboards and drums for that matter) are equal in the mix with the guitars – not buried under distortion. The songs have a good amount of space in them, which creates a great dynamic atmosphere about the songs.

As was pointed out in the interview, the lyrics here are very honest. Pain and hurt are not covered up. The album is called *Grieve* after all – so don't expect happy fun Jesus hippie music. But I would also agree with James and Mike that hope can be found if you care to dig in and listen. I am really looking forward to the re-issue to hear the unreleased songs from around this era – especially the popular demo tape that got them so much attention back in the day.



EXTREME SAUDADES DE ROCK

2008 Fontana Records
Purchase: Extreme-Band.com
Review by: Matt Crosslin

Hair metal in our magazine? What next? Rap? Probably not, but hold on a second – Extreme never really was hair metal. They got marketed that way, but never really fit that label. Their first album was probably as close to hair metal that they ever got, but still with a healthy dose of funk. By the time they hit it big, the hair part was gone and the hard rock/funk was in full effect.

Saudades de Rock seems to fit somewhere between *III Sides to Every Story* and *Waiting For the Punchline*, maybe with a little more energy than both. Energy is a key word here – Extreme doesn't sound like a tired old band trying to relive glory days. They are really in to these songs, not caring if they make another radio hit or not.

"Star" leads off the disc with the classic Extreme sound in full force. This is also the first single... which did get played on some classic rock stations when it came out. There is a ton of shredder guitar all over this song (and the whole album actually), so if that turns you off – this album won't be your thing. The vocals on *Saudades* show more than a passing nod to the Beatles. The funk is a little more integrated into the songs than it was their break-through *Pornograffiti* album, but it is there if you are listening. In fact, that is probably what saves Extreme from any hair metal trappings.



**MIKE STAND
FULL CIRCLE**

2002 Galaxy 21 Music

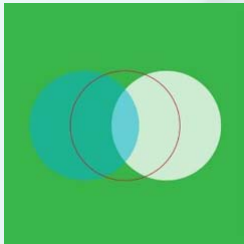
Purchase: AltarBoys.com

Review by: Steve Ruff

Mike Stand has always put out really good music. Of course The Altar Boys were innovative in the scene, but I really enjoyed his solo work much more. Maybe it was the lyrical content that was very different from the band's work, I'm not really sure. Anyway, I was telling him how much I liked his solo records when he said, "Thanks for your thoughts on my solo recordings....each one is unique in their own way. I actually prefer *Full Circle* and listen to it often. Not to gloat over what I have done, but I enjoy hearing how Bob Hartry and others on that recording just added so much depth and quality to my songs...the songs aren't bad either." Of course, I grabbed *Full Circle* and popped it in the player because it had been a while since I had listened to it. It is definitely a great record, and I was shocked that there were 15 different people who played on it. It is the best of both worlds, introspective lyrics like I love from his solo ventures, and great musicianship from a band that sounds very cohesive and full. The instruments are plenty as well, there are the typical guitars (acoustic and electric) and bass, but you also find the violin, viola, cello, accordion and tin whistle in here. I guess you could classify this as straight up rock and roll, but there are slower offerings like the title track, and more amped up songs like "Bound To The Unknown". All in all, a great record that sounds very "Beatlesque" as a whole. This one came out in 2002, but fortunately it is still available in a couple of places.

www.altarboys.com (pick up Simple Expressions while you're there)

--- EP QUICK SHOTS --- EP QUICK SHOTS --- EP QUICK SHOTS ---



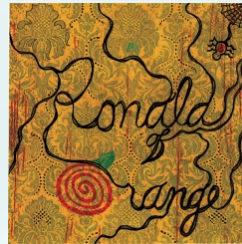
**THE LASSIE FOUNDATION
JETSTREAMS / THREE WHEELS EP**

2008 Independent

Purchase: LassieFoundation.com

Reviewed by: Joshua Lory

This E.P. is a wonderful return to form, back to the spacey feedback pop of the *California* E.P. and *Pacifico* album. The blues driven "Jetstreams" is a fantastic opener, I like how they held off the drums until about three minutes into the song. "Three Wheels" has a humbling vibe with great lyrics and really good guitar lines. "Under the Moon" is epic, goes in movements rather than a straight forward approach. Far too short on this release, can't wait for more.



**RONALD OF ORANGE
BRUSH AWAY THE COBWEBS EP**

2009 Velvet Blue Music

Purchase: VelvetBlueMusic.com

Reviewed by: Joshua Lory

Yet Another Ronnie Martin project, Ronald Of Orange is in the vein of the Rainbow Rider stuff he did way back in 1993, adding guitar and other instrumentation to his signature sound. This project, to me, spans a history of British pop – there's inklings of The Beatles, New Order, The Kinks, The Smiths, Herman's Hermits, etc. Five songs of some of his best material to date, I hope to hear a full length someday.



**STARFLYER 59
MINOR KEYS EP**

2009 Tooth & Nail Records

Purchase: ToothandNail.com

Reviewed by: Matt Crosslin

The obligatory "between albums" ep from SF59. This one is a digital ep, so you only have to get the songs you want. The lead-off song, "Minor Keys," is the same as from the album (would have liked a "radio mix" or something at least). This is followed by two nice acoustic covers of "The Brightest Of The Head" and "I Love You Like The Little Bird." Closing out this slightly short ep is a cover of "Under The Milky Way" by The Church. Can't say I like it more than the original, but it is still a good cover and fits the ep nicely.



**GLENN ROWLANDS
LIVING LIGHT EP**

2009 Independent

Purchase: MySpace.com

Reviewed by: Matt Crosslin

This is called a companion disc to *Red Road* and "a rock and roll tribute to the visions of Holy Man Black Elk." I would agree with both. If you like Glenn's solo discs, or classic-rock inspired hard rock that has an eclectic streak, this will be right up your alley. All of the songs rock along at a mid-paced tempo. None of the songs from *Red Road* are repeated here, although there is a song on this ep called "Red Road." Five songs total for \$2 (including shipping).



← *Sainte-Chappelle Blur 1* by Rick McDonough (2008) →

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